THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 5 November, 1923 Number 5

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By L. TROTZKY

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By a Member of the Yorkshire Miners' Association

"Polikushka"
A Review by E.R.

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NOTES of the MONTH

The Menace in Germany—A Class Issue—Hushing up the World Revolution—The Silence of Knowledge—Black Dictatorship or Red—Democracy in Practice—A New Capitalist Offensive—The Bourgeois United Front—The Decisive Hour

BEFORE the terrible state of events in Germany it is not easy to write quietly in terms of theoretical analysis. When crowds of starving men and women are besieging shop windows with no money to buy, and are driven down by armed police with swords and revolvers, then it is difficult to believe that the most constitutional democratic socialist cannot feel some indignation, and not least when he realises that that sword was put in the hands of the policeman by a social democrat instead of helping the starving men and women. Against the black alliance of Stinnes, French militarism, and the Second International, combining at this moment to crush down the German workers to the extreme of exploitation and subjection, it is difficult to believe that every active force in the working-class movement would not rise in immediate opposition or would fail to realise the deadly threat conveyed to the whole European working class. Yet the reaction of feeling in this country to-day is still conventional, indifferent, in terms of obsolete issues, utterly without relation to the present situation.

CAN it not be seen to-day at any rate that the German issue, and indeed the whole European issue, is a class issue? There is no "France" or "Germany," or exacting of reparations from the German "nation." Instead there is Stinnes and Degoutte meeting to arrange how to impose a ten-hour day on the German workers; and the German Government timidly trying to take part in the negotiations and being contemptuously relegated to the rôle of a policeman. What is Stinnes? What is Degoutte? The one is slave-driver, the other is bully, of the same Central European plantation on which both live: and their quarrels and contracts and agreements are only the haggling of slave-driver and

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bully over their respective shares of the proceeds. They are the prototypes of post-war European culture: able to meet together as civilised bourgeois representatives and upholders of all political, moral, and æsthetic values (slave-driver and bully) against the rising tide of the proletarian revolution.

YET at this moment in British Labour propaganda the issue is still presented as an issue of France and Germany: the fight is still presented as a fight over reparations; the solution as some kind of settlement over reparations and debts. Why this blindness to the existence of the German workers? Why this compassionate upholding of the cause of Stinnes? Why this heroic applause of Baldwin against Poincaré? Why this indifference to what the settlement preparing must actually mean to the working class? Why this deafness to the actual clash already sounding? Why this complacent acceptance of a dictatorship against the workers established by their own colleagues of the Second International? There is one answer to all this, and only one. Eyes and ears are there: and eyes and ears are daily assailed by the torrent of facts. But to admit the facts to-day is not merely to admit the immediate facts. It is to admit the world revolution.

TO admit the facts to-day is to admit the failure of every theory and assumption on which the present policy of the British Labour Movement has been built up. They preached democracy. Their own side has thrown it over. They preached international peace to be achieved on the sword of the Allies. The Allies have destroyed it. They preached the improvement of the workers' conditions by the "peaceful" progressive methods of German social democracy instead of the "violence" of the Russian workers. To-day the German workers are in the descending hell of misery: the Russian workers are on the rising path of health and strength. They preached capitalist reconstruction and increasing production and prosperity. The outcome has been wholesale unemployment, growing dislocation, and falling standards shattered by the capitalist offensive. Every shred and remnant of which the tattered banner of the Second International was made up after the war has been scorched and shrivelled in the blaze of events, and

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the stark issue of the world struggle of capitalist reaction and the workers' revolution stands out clear and inescapable. The leaders of the British Labour Movement are not blind from ignorance. They are well posted through their international contacts in what is happening. They are blind, not from ignorance, but from knowledge. They are silent with too much understanding. Just as two years ago the chatter of the Centre dried up as the real issue became clear between the reaction of the Second International and the united fight of the Communist International, so to-day the Second International has become silent as the supreme battle has become clear between the black dictatorship of Stinnes-Poincaré and the proletarian dictatorship of the Communist International.

"TAKE care that for fear of a red dictatorship you do not come to accept a yellow or black dictatorship." How soon have Fimmen's words to the British Trades Union Congress become realised. Military dictatorship against the workers has been established in Germany—by the Social Democrats. Without the will of the Social Democrats that dictatorship could never have been established. Without the vote of the Social Democrats the Chancellor would never have secured a quorum for his Emergency Powers Act, much less its passage. Without the presence of the Social Democrats in the Cabinet the appointment of notorious monarchists as the dictators could never have been imposed on the workers. In 1921 the establishment of military dictatorship against the working class failed because of the united opposition of the trade unions. In 1923 it succeeded because the Social Democrats helped to establish it. There has been no other purpose in the presence of the Social Democrats in the Stresemann Cabinet. There is nothing they can point to that they have achieved by it. There is not even the fig leaf of constitutionalism: for the Social Democratic President Ebert had declared already that he would proclaim the dictatorship in any case even if it did not pass the Reichstag. There is not a single right or protection for the workers they can claim to have preserved. Even the eight-hour day, on which they made their short-lived stand as (in their own words) "the last remnant of the victories of the revolution," they abandoned with a formula that preserved it "in principle" while

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agreeing to its destruction in practice. Hilferding's financial schemes were soon given up and himself sacrificed. For what then have they abandoned everything? In order to establish a dictatorship of militarists and industrialists, which is engaged in breaking up working-class organisation, smashing the working-class Press, shooting and sabring workers in the streets, and at the same time supporting and consolidating the illegal Fascist and nationalist armed anti-working-class organisations. All this the Social Democrat Ministers in the Cabinet are sanctioning and encouraging by their presence, until the time comes when the workers are finally stripped and helpless before their enemy and the Social Democratic puppets are flung aside as of no further value.

LET every worker who has ever listened to the beautiful phrases of a MacDonald or a Thomas or a Brailsford about the great democratic principle and the violence and cruelty of dictatorship consider this picture: for here are the facts that those phrases conceal. To believe in democracy can be an honest dream, and even a beautiful dream, even though it is the dream of a man blind to the cruel pyramid of existing society. But the Labour and Socialist International does not stand for democracy. Its prospectus may be democracy: but its policy is different. Its policy is dictatorship—but dictatorship of a different kind. Against the dictatorship of the working classes and the peasants, of the vast majority in the interests of the vast majority, it puts forward and supports a dictatorship of a handful of militarists and industrialists breaking down the workers to heavy exploitation with the armed assistance of the foreign bourgeoisie. And this policy is endorsed and supported by Henderson and Thomas and the other leaders of the British Labour Party who are united with the Social Democrats in the Labour and Socialist International. We do not blame them for supporting a dictatorship. We agree that in times of social crisis a dictatorship is inevitable. But we do blame them for supporting a dictatorship of the exploiters and militarists against the workers instead of a dictatorship of the workers against the exploiters and militarists. This, then, is the practical working out of democratic principles. The beginning of the avenue is fair enough—Weimar hurrahs and "the freest Parliament of the

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freest State on earth"; the end is Von Kahr and the Emperor Stinnes, the machine guns in the streets and the women shot in the market places. And what is happening in Germany is only an advance working model of what must happen in every country of capitalism in Europe and America. As sure as democracy is democracy, as the Second International is the Second International, and the class war is the class war, so surely will the same scenes be enacted in England: the armoured cars will race through the streets, and the bombs will rain down from aeroplanes on the heads of strikers, and all this will be done under the seal and signature of MacDonald and Thomas.

BUT the dictatorship in Germany is something more than a phenomenon of social collapse. It is the spearhead of a European capitalist offensive against the workers. The nature of that offensive is already clear. It is an offensive for intensified exploitation as the only means of carrying on the broken-down capitalist economy. Its watchwords are the ten-hour day and the destruction of trade union protective standards. Its initial scene of operations is the principal centre of European production, the Ruhr. Its agents are the Ruhr industrialists: but behind them and working with them are the French Government on one side and the German on the other. The Stresemann Government came to power as the representative of a single policy, but with a two-fold aspect. The single policy was the policy of the big industrialists, from whose party Stresemann came. Its two-fold aspect was capitulation abroad and dictatorship at home. The day after the capitulation the dictatorship was set up. In the words of the *Times* correspondent "violent measures have been taken against disorders before those disorders have actually occurred." But what is the meaning of a policy of capitulation abroad and dictatorship at home? It means the united front of the bourgeoisie against the working class.

THE French and German Governments play into each other's hands through the mediation of Stinnes, while the British Government abstains from interference. The French Government, so adamant to German overtures, readily

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negotiates with Stinnes. Stinnes, having thus made friends with the enemy behind the Government's back in so open a way as to provoke the cry of "Treason!" is endorsed and approved by the German Government. The industrialists, who were ready to sacrifice all in an heroic national passive resistance hand in hand with their workers, now raise no objection to being protected by French bayonets against those workers. The French troops are used to suppress Communist agitation and clear the streets of Dusseldorf with armoured cars. The British forces, it is announced, are ready to "restore order" if the German forces should be insufficient. The German Government orders the Ruhr workers to take the oath of allegiance to the Franco-Belgian *regie*. Is it not clear that what is being prepared behind the fantastic network of the reparations issue is something very much simpler—the subjection of the German working class to a gigantic industrial combine? And if that subjection succeeds, then it must lead the way to the subjection of the European working class.

IF a Franco-German reparations settlement is reached on the lines of the Stinnes negotiations, if the Ruhr and the Rhineland are made a separate economic domain, if the German workers are provoked into sporadic hunger struggles to be suppressed in blood by the weapons so elaborately prepared against them, and if such a suppression is followed by the consolidation of the dictatorship in some more permanent form, whether monarchic or otherwise, and the extirpation of all militant working-class organisation, then the European Counter-Revolution will have won its battle for the immediate period and set up in the face of economic forces its system of post-war capitalism on a basis of military dictatorship and vast trustified exploitation. In that hour it will be too late for the British working class to move: for their fate will be found to be as irretrievably bound up with that of the European working class as it has proved to be during the past three years. But to act is to act now: for every day that is lost, every day that leaves free and unchecked the military preparations of the German, the French, and the British bourgeoisie, is loading the dice against the working class.

R. P. D.

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MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY POLITICS ALONE

By L. TROTZKY

WE have got to soak ourselves thoroughly in this simple idea—"man does not live by politics alone"—and never forget it in our propaganda, written or spoken. Formerly, things were different. The history of our Party before the revolution was one of revolutionary *politics*. Its literature, its organisation—the whole of the Party in fact—was political in the most direct, immediate, and narrow sense of the word. The years of revolutionary transition and of civil war made the political interests and the political tasks still more acute and urgent. During these years the Party succeeded in gathering into its ranks the most active elements in the working classes; and also the fundamental political teachings of these years are quite clear now in the eyes of the working classes. Simply to repeat them adds nothing to them in the eyes of the workers, and is more likely to weaken their influence than to increase it. Now that we have conquered power and gripped it firmly by civil war, our fundamental duties are changed; they are to be found within the boundaries of economic and cultural construction; they have become complicated, fragmentary, and scattered, and, in some ways, more "prosaic." Yet at the same time all our former struggles, with all the efforts and sacrifices that they needed, can only be justified in so far as we succeed in rightly stating and solving these daily inconclusive problems, which can be classed as cultural.

Actually, what is it that the working class has gained by its previous struggles?

(1) *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (exercised by the Workers' and Peasants' State and directed by the Communist Party).

(2) *The Red Army*, the material support of this dictatorship.

(3) *Nationalisation* of the most important instruments of production, without which the dictatorship of the proletariat would be a meaningless formula.

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(4) *Monopoly of Foreign Trade*, the necessary condition for Socialist construction in a country encircled by capitalist States.

These four factors, definitely secured, form the armour covering all our work. Thanks to this armour, each of our economic or cultural successes—if it is a real success and not merely an apparent one—necessarily becomes a constituent part of the Socialist structure.

What then is our present task? What ought we to learn first? What should our aims be?

We have got to learn to work well, punctually, neatly, economically. We need culture in work, culture in life, culture in our habits. The domination of the exploiters we have overthrown—after a long preparation—by armed insurrection. But there is no lever which can raise at one blow the level of culture. What is needed here is a long process of self-education by the working class and the peasantry.

Of this change in the orientation of our attention and our efforts Lenin has written in an article on "Co-operation." [1]

> We are compelled to recognise a radical change in our point of view with regard to Socialism. The radical change is this: formerly we laid emphasis—we were compelled to do so—on the political struggle, on revolution, and on the conquest of power; while now we must lay all our emphasis on peaceful organisation and on "cultural" work. Or rather, I would be prepared to say that we should lay all emphasis on cultural work if we were not compelled to fight for our international position. Putting that aside for the moment, and limiting ourselves to internal economic relations, we can truly say that we now emphasise mainly work that may be described as cultural.

Preoccupation with our international position, then, is the only thing that can distract us now from the work of culture—and that only to a certain extent, as we shall soon see. The most important factor in our international situation is the defence of our State: that is, above all, the Red Army. But here again nine-tenths of our task is cultural: we have to raise the culture of the army, assure its education, teach it to use notebooks, textbooks, and maps, and to develop the habits of cleanliness, punctuality, exactitude, attention, and vigilance. The attempt to create, at the end of the period of civil war, when we were passing to a new epoch of labour,

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a " military creed of the proletariat " was a very striking sign of our appreciation of the new tasks before us. It was exactly analogous to the presumptuous attempt to create, in literary laboratories, a " proletarian culture." In this search for the philosopher's stone, despair at our backward position is mingled with a belief in miracles —which is itself a proof of undeveloped mentality. But we have no reason at all for despair, and it is really time for us to give up believing in miracles such as an immediately discoverable " proletarian culture " or " military creed." Covered by the armour of proletarian dictatorship, we have got to extend our daily work of culture, which alone can secure a Socialist fulfilment of the essential conquests of the revolution. Whoever does not see this plays a reactionary part in the thought and activity of the Party.

When Lenin says that our present tasks lie more in the region of culture than in that of politics, it is necessary, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, to pause a moment and consider these terms. In a certain sense politics dominate everything. Even Lenin's advice—to transfer our attention from politics to culture—is *political* advice. When a Workers' Party decides, in one country or another, that it is necessary to put forward in the forefront of its programme demands which are economic and not political, even this decision is political in character. It is quite obvious that the word " politics " is used here in two different senses : first in the wide sense of dialectical materialism, embracing the totality of all the ideas, methods, and dominant systems that give direction to the activities of a community in all the spheres of social life ; and then in a narrow and special sense, as applied to one definite side of the activities of a society, closely bound up with the fight for power and contrasting with economic and cultural work, &c. When Lenin wrote that *politics are concentrated economics* he was speaking of politics in general, in the philosophic sense of the word. When Lenin says, " A little less politics, a little more economics," he was taking " politics " in the narrow specialised sense. Both ways of using the word are legitimate in so far as they are customary. The important thing is only that we should understand clearly, each time the word is used, what it is that is meant by it.

The Communist organisation is a political party in the historical or philosophical sense of the word. The other parties are above

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all political in that they concern themselves with the (lesser) "politics." The fact that our Party is henceforward concentrating the greater part of its attention on cultural work does not, therefore, mean that its political rôle is diminished. Its historical rôle of (political) leadership is precisely to be found in this calculated switching of attention towards cultural work. It is only after long years of socialist work, crowned by success, within Russia, and of complete security in foreign affairs, that a Party like ours will be able, little by little, to divest itself of its shape as a party, to dissolve itself in the Socialist society. We are still so far from this that it is not worth thinking about it as yet. For the period ahead of us, the Party must keep in their entirety its essential characteristics: unity of thought, centralisation, discipline, and the combative vigour which results from these. But these very qualities of the Communist Party, which are so invaluable, can only be preserved and developed, under present conditions, by the satisfaction of economic and cultural needs and aspirations in the widest, most intelligent, just, and meticulous way possible.

The proletariat is a powerful social unity which, in periods of hard revolutionary fighting for aims which are those of the whole class, comes completely into line. But in this unity we can see an extreme diversity and even a good few incompatibilities—from the illiterate shepherd to the highly skilled mechanic. Without this diversity the Communist task of unification and education would be the simplest thing in the world. One might say that the greater the history of a country, the greater is that of its working class, the richer it is in memories, traditions, habits, old groupings of forces—and the more difficult it is to form from it a revolutionary unity.

Our Russian proletariat has little history or tradition behind it and this certainly facilitated its preparation for revolution in the Red October. But the same fact has since hindered its work of economic construction. Most of our workers lack the simplest habits and abilities of culture (the power to read, to write, to keep healthy, to be punctual). The European worker has had a long time in which to acquire these habits in bourgeois society; that is why the higher grades of European Labour hold so tightly

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to the bourgeois order, to democracy, to the capitalist free Press, and other benefits of this sort. Our backward Russian bourgeoisie has scarcely given anything of this sort to the workers ; that is why the Russian proletariat has more easily broken with the bourgeoisie and overthrown it. But for the same reason it is forced for the most part to win and accumulate only now (*i.e.*, on the basis of the workers' Socialist State) the simplest habits of culture.

The revolutionary armour covering our new society—the dictatorship, the Red Army, nationalisation, and the foreign trade monopoly—gives an objectively Socialist character to all deliberate and conscientious efforts in economics or culture. In bourgeois society the worker was always enriching the bourgeoisie without intending to and without thinking of it—enriching the more as he worked harder. In the Soviet State, the good, conscientious worker, even without thinking of it (if he is non-party or non-political), is doing Socialist work as he increases the resources of the working class. That is the achievement of the October Revolution, and the New Economic Policy has not changed it.

There are a large number of workers, not belonging to any party, who are keen on production and on technical skill and loyal to their factory ; one cannot speak of them as " politically indifferent " except in a purely conventional sense. At the gravest and most difficult hours of the revolution they were with us. The vast majority of them were undismayed by the revolution ; they were not deserters, they were not traitors.

During the civil war many of them fought, while others worked their utmost on munitions. From this they passed straightaway to the labours of peace. One has, however, some reason for calling them " non-political," because the interest of corporate production or of the family comprises for them, at least in normal times, their whole " political interest."

Each one among them wishes to be a good workman, to perfect himself in his trade, to reach a higher degree of accomplishment, as much from a desire to better the conditions of his own home as from a legitimate professional pride. And let us repeat that in so doing each one among them does Socialist work even without knowing it. But we, the Communist Party, are concerned that these

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producers should consciously direct their daily, minor, industrial efforts towards the objectives of Socialism.

How can this be achieved? It is difficult to get in touch with this type of workman along the lines of pure politics. He has heard all we have to say. He is not interested. He thinks in terms of his work-place and he is not too pleased with all that is happening at present at his work-place in the shop, in the factory, in the Trust. These workers want to think things out for themselves, they often have a reserved, "shut-up" attitude; it is from this class of workers that self-taught inventors come.

We cannot approach them on the political side, or at least we cannot in that way touch them very profoundly, but we can and we must reach them *through production itself and through technical skill.*

Comrade Koltsov (of the group connected with the *Krasnaia-Presnia*, Moscow), a Communist agitator in contact with the masses, has pointed out the lack of Soviet handbooks of instruction and of textbooks intended to be studied without a teacher, dealing with special technical subjects and separate trades. The old stocks of these books are exhausted; many works are out of date from a political point of view; they are very often impregnated with the most pernicious spirit of capitalism. The new handbooks are too few in number; they are difficult to get hold of as they have been published at different times by different publishers, or by different departments, acting without any concerted plan.

Technically, their use is often small as they are too theoretical, too academic; politically, they are invariably incoherent, as they are usually abbreviated translations. We need new pocket handbooks for the Soviet locksmith, the Soviet turner, the electrical fitter, and for many others. These manuals must be adapted to our actual economic and political conditions; they must take into account our poverty and our enormous potentialities; and they should instil into our productive system the most common-sense habits and new methods. They ought to allow, to a certain extent, the Socialist vista to be seen beyond the needs and interests of industrial policy (the standardisation of labour, electrification, the single economic plan).

Socialist ideas and conclusions ought to be an integral part of the practical theory in these books and should never

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assume the guise of agitation dissociated from the subject matter. The demand for such books is enormous. It is caused by the need for skilled manual labour and the desire of the workers themselves to become more skilful. It is accentuated by the interruption, during the imperialist and civil wars, of all high-grade industrial training. The task before us is the most fruitful and the most important possible.

Let us not deceive ourselves by supposing that it is easy to create a series of manuals of this kind. The experienced workman, even if highly skilled, does not know how to write books. Technical writers often lack practical experience; moreover, the number among them with a Socialist view-point is very small.

Nevertheless, this task can be accomplished, not by routine methods, but on the contrary with new methods, by combining. In order to write a handbook it is necessary to form a group, of three for example, consisting of a professional writer, with technical knowledge of the subject and acquainted as much as possible with the state of our industry or able to study it; of a highly skilled workman interested in production and with an inventive turn of mind; and of a Marxist writer with some technical industrial knowledge. Proceeding thus, or on similar lines, we must create a model library of industrial technique; of course, well produced, of a convenient size, at a moderate price. This library would have a double rôle: it would contribute to the perfecting of skilled labour and in consequence of the Socialist edifice, and it would help us to get in touch with a valuable group of producers in the Socialist economy in its wider sense, and, therefore, valuable to the Communist Party.

It is evident that the task is not limited to a series of manuals. We have lingered over this example because we think it is a striking example of a new method of working, corresponding to the new objectives of the present time. A diversity of methods can and should be employed to win the non-political producers. We need scientific and technical periodicals, and special ones for each industry, issued weekly or monthly; we need scientific and technical societies designed to attract the worker of whom we are speaking. A good half of our trade union press ought to be intended for him. But the most convincing political argument in the eyes

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of the class of worker we are trying to get hold of will be furnished by *every practical success in production, by every real improvement in the conditions of the factory and workshop, and by every deliberate effort made by the Party in this direction.*

The political philosophy of this productive worker may be expressed—although it is only rarely that he himself gives it expression—in formulæ of this sort :—

" The revolution, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, that is all clear and definite : we do not need the bourgeoisie or their agents the Mensheviks. The liberty of the Press is not of much importance. All this is not the point. *But how are we going to get on with production?* You, the Communists, have set yourselves out to direct it. Your aims, your projects, are good, excellent, we know ; it is not worth while repeating all this to us. We have heard you before on this ; we agree, we support you—but how are you going to get there in practice ? We put up with the crimes of the bourgeoisie and we can well be patient with the mistakes of the revolution. But not patient for ever, all the same . . . "

The man who speaks in this way may be an old turner, a scrupulous worker, or a locksmith, or a foundryman—attentive to what he is doing, not an enthusiast in politics, but rather passive, yet reflective and critical. He is often a little sceptical, but always faithful to his class. This is a real work—and one of the best. Our Party in its present work has got to think of him.

This orientation towards the sound workman does not clash with another of the foremost tasks of our Party : to win over the younger generation of workers. For the younger generation is growing up on the basis that our solution of the main problems gives to it. *The younger generation ought before all to be a generation of sound workers, highly skilled and keen on their work.* It ought to grow up in the knowledge that its productive labour is also a work of Socialism. For this reason the orientation of our efforts towards the sound, skilful, and conscientious worker is also the direction we must take in educating the youth of the working class. Without it the advance towards Socialism will be impossible.

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ZERO HOUR IN GERMANY

By C. M. ROEBUCK

§ 1.—*The Treachery of the Social-Democracy*

AT the time of writing (October 15) it is not yet clear whether, as reported, a dozen members of the German Social Democratic Reichstag group actually refused to vote for the Emergency Powers Bill, in spite of the threat of expulsion from the Party. If it is true, their names will one day be written in letters of gold on the walls of the palace which houses the German Workers' Government—side by side with the names, if not of Ruhle, who first voted against the war credits in 1914, at least of Haase and Ledebour, the first who broke party discipline the next year.

For the crisis with which the German workers are faced is one as pregnant with meaning for the whole of world history as the crisis at the outbreak of the late imperialist war. The granting of practically unlimited power, for an indefinite period, to the bourgeois government of the Reich to-day is as important an act as the conferring of plenipotentiary power to wage war, by the voting of the war credits, was in the days when the German mark still bore a terrestrial and not an astronomical value. Then, as now, the fate of the whole bourgeois machinery of government was trembling in the balance ; now, as then, the proletariat is in an active, fighting mood, prepared to strike heavy blows in defence of its vital interests. And for the Social Democratic Party, a party which claims to voice the demands of the workers, obediently to lead the workers up to the altar, that they may literally immolate themselves and their families, by the sacrifice of their blood infusing new life into the worn-out and corrupted system of capitalist society, is as gross and cowardly an act of treachery in 1923 as it was in 1914.

Of course, treachery, as in 1914, is fast bound up with hypocrisy. Just as then the Social Democracy made the " sacrifice " of its " principles " only for the sake of the sacred cause of national unity, so to-day it sold its honour " only " when another sacred

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cause—that of parliamentary democracy—was in dire peril. Incidentally, it is worth noting that this proletarian vestal parts with her chastity only for the sake of principles consecrated in the *bourgeois* revolutions of the nineteenth century—the principles of nationality and of "representative government." And, like all her bourgeois sisters, she is ready for the sake of these principles to sell her country to the French at the best price her (somewhat depreciated) charms can buy, and accept a lord and master at the hands of the militarist clique, for whom democracy is a term of abuse and parliament a subject for laughter.

This is not an isolated act, or a sudden lapse from virtue, of the German Social Democratic Party. On the contrary, it is the last of a long series of similar betrayals, differing only in the circumstances in which they took place. Consequently it is the most likely to fail of its purpose. For a long time past the German workers have been losing faith in the S.D.P., and have been showing it by leaving its ranks, literally in hundreds of thousands (the paying membership has fallen from 1,800,000 to 700,000 in a year), by transferring their allegiance within the trade union movement to the Communist Party of Germany (K.P.D.), and by rallying, in ever larger and larger masses, to every call of the workshop and factory councils, in spite of the prohibitions and denunciations of the Social-Democratic leaders. During the last few months the gigantic, forty-year-old organisation of the S.D.P. has been literally decaying and falling to pieces: at Hamburg, in Saxony and Thuringia, in Berlin the district organisations have been swept away in the flame of mass revolt, denounced their executives, and have thrown in their lot with the Communists. And to-day, now that the propaganda of the old Party leaders has ceased to be of avail, now that their sole weapon is expulsion, or threat of expulsion, their task will become infinitely more difficult when the workers see that the defence of the interests of the Republic has been entrusted to —Stresemann, the nominee of the Prussian junkers!

The Social Democratic Party, the creation of Liebknecht and Bebel, the pupil of Marx and Engels, has made the last and greatest of its "great refusals"—those refusals to shoulder the burden of historical necessity which determine that those who have evaded their duty shall be blotted out for ever from the history of

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human achievement. Henceforth the S.D.P., which at the hour of decisive struggle between the exploiters and the proletariat has taken the side of the exploiters, will itself seek for no better lot than self-extinction and oblivion.

§ 2.—*The Collapse of the Capitalist Economy*

" It is the ultimate money form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual producers."

Ever since the Great War the bourgeoisie in all countries has had bitter cause to reflect on the truth of this maxim of *Capital*, and on the destructive results when the social relations between the individual producers are forced out, naked and reluctant, into the light by the refusal of the " money form " established by scores of years of usage and custom to act any longer in its true capacity. And in Germany the collapse of the mark has been the first and most violent index (not cause) of capitalist collapse.

Here are the figures for the exchange rate (marks against sterling):—

Par	20.40	July 2, 1923 ..	730,000
January 1, 1922	789	July 16, 1923 ..	900,000
July 1, 1922 ..	1,768	July 30, 1923 ..	5,000,000
January 1, 1923	33,500	August 31, 1923..	47,000,000
February 2, 1923	193,000	September 12, 1923	440,000,000
March 2, 1923	107,250	October 1, 1923..	1,100,000,000
April 3, 1923 ..	98,250	October 5, 1923..	2,730,000,000
May 2, 1923 ..	146,750	October 9, 1923..	25,000,000,000
June 1, 1923 ..	344,500	October 19, 1923	80,000,000,000

Working backwards from this table, and inquiring the causes of this depreciation, we find that they are threefold: (*a*) the general impoverishment (absolute wastage) caused by the war ; (*b*) the impoverishment caused by losses under the Versailles Treaty and by Reparations, including the occupation of the Ruhr; (*c*) the inflation of the currency, to cover expenses of government, and to provide credits for the great manufacturers, enabling them to buy coal, iron, and raw materials abroad, without taxing them in return.

It is not of immediate interest to consider losses during the war: they cannot be compared with the disasters suffered by Germany as a consequence of the peace. Out of a possible maximum

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output (1913 figures) of 191,500,000 tons of coal, an output of 60,800,000 tons was lost when Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar, and Upper Silesia were torn from Germany by the Versailles Treaty; while, of the remaining 130,700,000 tons, over 114,000,000 tons were produced in the Ruhr and Rhineland, which the French seized in 1923. There remains, therefore, to Germany less than 9 per cent. of the coal she possessed before the war. Before the war, Germany possessed estimated reserves of iron ore amounting to 3,600,000,000 tons: after the war, according to the editor of the *Iron Trade Review*, she possesses no more than 1,374,000,000 tons. Out of a total 1913 production of 19.3 million tons of cast iron, about seventeen million tons were accounted for by territories lost to Germany by 1923; in the same way she has lost 17.2 million tons of steel, out of an annual production of 18.9 millions tons. Finally, while every other great power had materially increased the tonnage of its commercial fleet by January, 1923, as compared with 1914, Germany's tonnage fell from 5,098,000 tons to 2,496,000 tons.

Coal, iron, steel, ships—these are the life-blood of the modern industrial community, without which it becomes, first enfeebled, and ultimately a mere parasite in world-economy, only consuming and not producing. This is most clearly shown by the recent statistics of foreign trade, in which imports remain at a comparatively high level, owing to the huge quantities of coal and iron purchased abroad (in July, 1923, coal accounted for over 50 per cent. of imports, as against 25 per cent. in 1922), while exports fell to a miserably shrunken level, which shows only too clearly the complete economic decay of Germany—notwithstanding that very fall in the value of the mark which has enabled the German capitalists to undersell all the other nations in the world market:—

	Imports	Exports
	(In thousands of double centners)	
Average month, 1913 ..	60,693 ..	61,430
Average month, 1922 ..	38,230 ..	17,964
January, 1923	47,289 ..	13,093
February, 1923	31,661 ..	10,961
March, 1923	52,201 ..	9,382
April, 1923	63,961 ..	10,288
May, 1923	40,131 ..	9,299
June, 1923	48,066 ..	8,897
July, 1923	41,596 ..	10,540

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As previously mentioned, it is precisely the burden of maintaining imports at this relatively high level that has caused the inflation of the German currency. While the low value of the mark was a factor that favoured exports, it worked unfavourably in the case of imports, and the printing press was forced to come to the rescue of industry to a greater and greater degree. But the inflation before the present year loses all significance when we see the figures brought into the fiscal calculations by the necessity of providing *Rhurhilfe*, *i.e.*, the monetary subsidy granted by the German Government to the employers and workers of the Ruhr, the first in order that they might buy coal, iron, and raw materials abroad, and the second in order to maintain unbroken the policy of passive resistance and sabotage. Just as we saw the *Ruhrhilfe* producing the sharp breaks in the value of the mark in January and July of this year, so we see it introducing the arithmetic of astronomy into the statistics of State income and expenditure:—

	Expenditure	Income
	(In millions of marks)	
Average decade (ten days), 1913	70.5 ..	57.7
" " " " 1918	1,223 ..	205
" " " " 1920	1,268 ..	966
Second decade, November, 1922	117,443 ..	15,619
" " December, 1922	188,955 ..	33,166
" " January, 1923..	268,863 ..	58,295
" " February, 1923	607,611 ..	93,424
" " March, 1923 ..	1,559,398 ..	103,823
" " April, 1923 ..	885,328 ..	145,080
" " May, 1923 ..	935,498 ..	570,763
" " June, 1923 ..	2,794,900 ..	280,700
" " July, 1923 ..	12,506,600 ..	512,373
" " August, 1923..	246,000,000 ..	4,000,000
" " September, 1923	5,455,794,000 ..	84,660,000

Thus the second decade of September showed a deficit of 5,360 million marks. During the week ending September 26, the deficit amounted to 8,500 million millions! In this week, the *Ruhrhilfe* alone was costing forty million gold marks per day—or nearly 2,000 million millions in paper.

How has the worker felt the pressure of all these factors, to which must be added that of unfettered and shameless speculation in foodstuffs and articles of primary necessity? The first indication

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is to be found in the cost-of-living index. Beginning in January, 1923, at 1,120 (the 1913 level being reckoned as 100), it climbed comparatively slowly to 3,816 in May, and then doubled itself (7,650) by the beginning of June. From this time, at the insistent demand of the trade unions, the index was calculated weekly instead of monthly, and increased as follows:—

June 20	..	9,272	August 6	..	149,531
„ 27	..	11,785	„ 13	..	436,935
July 4	..	16,180	„ 20	..	753,733
„ 11	..	25,511	„ 27	..	1,183,434
„ 16	..	28,842	September 3	..	1,845,261
„ 23	..	39,336	„ 10	..	5,051,046
„ 30	..	71,476			

Detailed wages scales are not available, but the employers until a few months ago steadily refused to permit wages adjustments by collective bargaining on a weekly basis. The wage tariffs were adjusted monthly, but by the second week of the month turned to the heavy disadvantage of the worker, owing to the increase in the cost-of-living index. In January, 1923, the skilled worker in the principal industries (builders, woodworkers, textiles, metal trades) was receiving on an average a weekly wage equivalent to 63.2 per cent. of his pre-war wage; by May the percentage had risen to 74.9; while for unskilled workers the rate had risen from 83.7 per cent. to 98.1 per cent. In June, however, the index rapidly began to outrun wage increases, in spite of the weekly adjustments: and by the end of August a metalworker was receiving on the average 56-65 per cent. of his pre-war wages, while a compositor, the best paid trade, was receiving 65 per cent. From the middle of September onwards the daily degeneration of the mark has proceeded so rapidly that the average wages of skilled workers are not estimated to exceed 30-40 per cent. of their pre-war earnings.

What these figures mean in practice could be easily left to the imagination were there not abundant evidence in the despatches of British newspaper correspondents. A few slices of bread, occasionally a little lard and a few potatoes, with acorn coffee or some even worse substitute, as dietary: no money left for buying clothes or other necessaries, not to speak of recreation or education: gaunt, pallid faces, bearing the universal stamp of nervous exhaustion to

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the last degree; listless, transparent, unsmiling children—these are the impressions anyone carries away from a working-class quarter in Germany of what goes to make up life for the proletariat to-day.

To all these sufferings have lately been added those of unemployment and short time. Until the last two months, these were more prevalent than in any previous year except 1920, the year following demobilisation; but nevertheless, as before noted, the stimulus provided to industry by the possibilities of export abroad, together with the low cost of the wages item in the expenses of production, combined to maintain industry in an abnormal condition of activity. This, however, ceased to be the case when it became absolutely impossible to *buy* raw materials abroad owing to the collapse of the mark, or to turn manufactured goods into stable currency sufficiently quickly to meet the costs of production. Unemployment and short time both began to increase rapidly in September: between September 9 and 15 the percentage of metal workers unemployed rose from 7 per cent. to 7.7 per cent., and working short time from 25.3 per cent. to 28.4 per cent.: while during the second week in October it was reported that the total number of unemployed in all trade unions had risen to not less than 10 per cent. of the membership.

	1913	1921	1922	1923
	Percentage of trade union membership unemployed			
January ..	3.2	4.5	3.3	4.4
February ..	2.9	4.7	2.7	5.5
March ..	2.3	3.7	1.1	5.7
April	—	—	—	7.0
May	—	—	—	6.2
June	2.7	—	0.6	4.0
July	2.9	2.6	0.6	3.7

	Percentage of trade unionists on short time		Percentage of trade unionists on short time
December, 1921 ..	1.3	March, 1923 ..	23.6
March, 1922 ..	0.6	April, 1923 ..	28.5
June, 1922 ..	0.6	May, 1923 ..	21.7
September, 1922 ..	2.6	June, 1923 ..	15.3
December, 1922 ..	8.7	July, 1923 ..	14.5
January, 1923 ..	13.0	August, 1923..	26.0
February, 1923 ..	15.9		

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It will be noticed that the summer months helped partly to redress the adverse balance created by the occupation of the Ruhr, in respect both of unemployment and of short time: but the effect, of course, was only temporary. Food riots are now a daily occurrence in the industrial areas.

§ 3.—*The Fascist Dictatorship*

Capitalism in Germany has lost nearly all semblance of a system of production, distribution, and exchange. Realisation of this is being forced upon the workers by the every-day facts of their lives. The Social Democratic Party has thrown in its lot openly and irrevocably with the ruling class. It is therefore practically useless henceforth as a means of stupefying or hoodwinking the working class. Some other way of keeping the workers attentive to their functions in the process of production has to be devised. The only way open lies through force, and its name is Fascism. At the present moment, with a full civil and military dictatorship "constitutionally" installed, with a programme in which the main items are the cessation of passive resistance in the Ruhr (*i.e.*, of resistance by the workers to exploitation by French and German capitalists combined) and the extension of the eight-hour day to ten hours, Germany is not very far off a complete Fascist regime.

The approach made to this state of things is curious and instructive. It has not been a secret that, ever since the suppression of the workers' revolts in 1919 and 1920, Germany has been under the ill-concealed control of the militarists—a control which has been particularly undisguised and brutal during the last twelve months. For well over a year the condition of Bavaria, in particular, has been fully comparable to that of Italy: workers' organisations dissolved or their activity restricted, Communists treated as outlaws, Labour meetings broken up and Labour halls pillaged and burned, the Labour Press muzzled, and the Fascisti—the young bourgeois nationalists, monarchists, strike-breaking associations, &c.—given full freedom of action against the workers and of arming themselves almost without concealment. The principal war and post-war criminals—Ludendorff and the ex-Prince Rupprecht, Ehrhardt, Rossbach, and the murderers of Rathenau—

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are permitted to come and go freely, and are even treated with distinction. Elsewhere in Germany the conditions are the same: and if the Reichswehr "militia" and the Security Police have interfered at all in the activities of political organisations and in the formation of "unconstitutional" military units, it has not been against the Fascisti and their kidney, who have been free to preach murder and to practise it without hindrance. But there are large districts of Germany where for years the Communists have not been able openly to participate even in Parliamentary elections; while the formation of "proletarian centuries" in sheer self-defence has evoked the most savage repressions on the part of local and central authorities alike.

From the economic point of view, no less, Germany is ripe for Fascist rule, since she is in the grip of those capitalist groups, principally the Stinnes combine, who have throughout financed the Fascist organisations and military units. Not only are the premier industries, the largest and most productive factories, works, mines, printing establishments, shipyards and docks, shipping lines, &c., in the hands of the Stinnes combine, largely thanks to the fact that the bulk of its capital is invested abroad, but even the financial necessities of the Republic have been exploited to add to the wealth banked abroad. The *Ruhrhilfe* was paid direct to the manufacturers, the bulk, however, being destined to be paid as wages. But it proved a comparatively easy matter to buy stable foreign currency with the money instead, and to force upon the workers as wages "temporary currency" (*Notgeld*), issued by the municipalities and even private companies controlled or owned by the combine, and worthless outside the immediate vicinity. If, in August, the workers' demonstrations were not sufficient to oust Havenstein from the Reichsbank, in spite of the fact that this was the moment when workshop deputations to the Reichstag and a twelve-hour general strike had brought down the Cuno ministry and established a Coalition, it was due to the intervention of Stinnes. And if, in October, passive resistance by the Government has come to an end, it was under pressure from Stinnes, and after Stinnes had already come to terms with the French industrial interests with whom he hopes, later, to negotiate an "All-German" industrial bloc.

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Why, if militarily and economically the elements behind the Fascisti are so strong, do they not openly take power? The answer lies in an analysis of the classes represented, although a hint of it is to be found in the declaration of von Kahr, the civil " Republican " dictator of Bavaria: " I am too good a monarchist to proclaim a monarchy just now." Broadly speaking, the forces behind the Fascisti are twofold: the great industrial and financial magnates, whose aim is to establish a continental economic hegemony on the basis of a system of industrial slavery in Germany; and the great land-owning militarist clique, whose aim is the restoration of an All-German monarchy, even more centralised than that which existed before. Thus their coalition represents much the same forces (from the class, not the individual, point of view) as constituted the class basis of the Hohenzollerns. The formal seizure of power by the Fascisti, on behalf of the monarchy, would (1) bring the whole working class out in a united front of resistance, such as met and defeated the Kapp " putsch," with the difference that resort would certainly be had to civil war; (2) give the French a pretext for erecting a Rhineland Republic, undesirable for both the industrialists and for the Junkers; (3) encourage those sections of the Fascisti, principally from the lower middle class, who have little but extreme nationalist or monarchist ideals for their political stock-in-trade to proclaim local monarchies on the old plan, first and foremost in Bavaria and to make attacks on France ; (4) it would make the Fascisti group themselves—the national " heroes," Ludendorff, Rupprecht, Hindenburg, the Hohenzollerns, &c.—openly responsible for the disgraceful deal with the French on the Ruhr, thereby shattering their prestige amongst just those middle-class and lower middle-class " idealist " nationalists who constitute the rank and file of Fascism, and who would then become more accessible to direct Communist agitation.

The Junker-Stinnes groups are content to wield power through their puppets, conscious of being able to wait until some more suitable moment has arrived, and particularly until it has been possible to crush the working class once and for all—preferably by a " blood-bath " (as it was definitely decided to provoke on the Ruhr, and from which only the superhuman efforts of the Communist Party saved the workers).

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§ 4.—*The Workers' Outlook*

It is zero hour in Germany. The battlefield of civil war has been prepared, as no other country in the world has yet seen it prepared, and the opposing armies—the workers and the bourgeoisie—are each waiting for a move from the other before throwing their forces into the conflict. At such a moment two main factors decide the day—which side has the strongest nerves (discipline), and which side utilises every moment of respite for the maximum effort to organise and consolidate its forces (generalship).

In this respect the proletariat is moving forward and developing with inconceivable rapidity. Not only is allegiance being transferred from Social Democrats to Communists, from trade union leaders to leaders of the factory councils (now being more and more widely transformed into Soviets—*i.e.*, councils of delegates from *factories*); not only are proletarian centuries, in spite of all the violence of the Fascisti and the prohibitions of the Government, being hastily organised wherever there are factories to teach the lesson of the class struggle: but in two of the greatest industrial areas of Germany—Saxony and Thuringia—the working masses have united, irrespective of party, to vindicate their rights and to defend Republican institutions, and have forced a similar coalition upon the Social Democratic organisation. Heckert and Boettcher, two of the best-known members of the Central Committee of the K.P.D., are now Cabinet Ministers in Saxony, in a Government relying as much upon the Factory Councils' Congress as upon the Diet. In Berlin it is generally expected that the Social Democratic district executive will be entirely replaced in the next week or two, and the editorial staff of *Vorwaerts* also, by definitely Left Wing representatives. A sign of the times is the rapid increase in membership of the Communist Party, which now has probably not less than 400,000 members, because it is above all the programme, the watchwords, and the tactics of the K.P.D. which have found abundant justification in the eyes of the German workers during the last few months.

Most striking and significant is the fact that, just as happened in Russia in 1917, the ferment amongst the masses has reached such dimensions as to seize the imagination, as it were in spite of themselves, of all the bourgeois journalists who take the trouble to

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ponder over the meaning of present events, with the result that they write more clearly revolutionary and Marxist accounts of what they see than many a Marxist would—or could!

If the Fascist army strikes, or even if it succeeds in provoking hunger disorders (its present tactics), which may inevitably involve the whole of the workers in the defence and support of the section attacked, the proletarian army will be ready for it. On the other hand, if, owing to the "indiscretion" of some local Fascisti (as, for example, the seizure of Kustrin at the beginning of October), a local situation arises which requires prompt action, the working class has learned its lesson of revolutionary discipline and tactics so well that it will not be needlessly provoked into a general engagement.

But a general engagement, when it comes, will involve consideration of more factors than those at present involved in the internal politics of Germany. Suppose, for example, that a civil war is in progress, and a Workers' Government fully established in a considerable area of Germany, with a chance of military success; and that suddenly one of Germany's eastern neighbours—particularly Poland—thinks fit to take the field against her, allured by the bait of East Prussia. A grave responsibility will fall upon the British workers, who proved able to exert considerable pressure upon Poland in the years 1920-1922 in order to restrain the martial ardour of her reactionary landowners: but a much greater responsibility will fall upon the Russian workers, who, besides being the nearest, are also directly interested in seeing that Germany is not made fit for autocracy once more.

The other and more pressing danger is that Great Britain may be involved as the result of the machinations of the British Government. One possible alternative is that, on some pretext or other, the French troops will be ordered to advance, and that then, as in 1914, in spite of all the assurances of ministerial liars, there will turn out to be some unwritten "honourable understanding" that the British Navy occupies the North Sea and Baltic ports and lands expeditionary forces. The other, and still more probable, eventuality is that the British forces now on the Rhine may be sent (as even the *Daily Express* points out) at any moment to shoot down or bayonet German unemployed or factory workers, whether in a hunger riot

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or in a violent and unlawful effort to protect themselves against Fascist violence. And in this case experience in Russia has shown us how easily the simple restoration of "order" develops into the Restoration—without any order, but with the capital letter.

Such a possibility cannot be a matter of indifference, or anything but a matter of the most vital urgency, for British Labour. Apart from the natural instinct of working-class solidarity, which will respond to the appeal of a Workers' and Peasants' Government in Germany no less warmly and enthusiastically than it did to that of Soviet Russia, the economic facts of Germany to-day have told in the concrete form of the lower wages and worse working conditions of the British worker. If the German workers are forced down for a generation into the position of slaves of the Iron Heel of Fascist-Stinnesism, a deadly blow will be struck at the economic, and almost immediately at the political, position of the British worker. A year after the crushing of the German workers we should expect to find, not only a grand concerted attack upon Socialist Soviet Russia, but also a Government of unchecked and bigoted Die-Hards at Downing Street. Against that consummation the British worker would be glad of an opportunity to strike a blow in good time. The only opportunity he will have will be when he strikes it on behalf of his German comrades.

It is this problem—the problem of mobilising Labour resistance to any support of German Fascism, of securing the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Germany, of organising material support of the German workers—that demands the immediate and undivided attention of the political and industrial organisations of the British working class.

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The TRADES COUNCILS CONFERENCE

By HARRY POLLITT

THE Second Annual Conference of the National Federation of Trades Councils, which is being held in Birmingham on November 17, is an event of great importance and significance. Coming so soon after the debacle at the Plymouth Trades Congress, its proceedings will be watched by millions of workers who are waiting for a lead on the many problems now confronting them.

The present failure and weakness, of which the whole movement is conscious after the Plymouth Trades Union Congress, makes it of vital importance that the earliest opportunity should be taken to retrieve the position. What is wanted is a rallying centre to face up to the mistakes that have been made and show the way to a move forward in order to reverse the present position and give a new lead to the movement.

This is what the Birmingham Trades Council Conference must attempt to do.

The Trades Councils are peculiarly well fitted at the present juncture for this task. Face to face with the local experience of every problem and struggle, they see in direct contact the working out of every mistake and weakness of the movement. Forced to deal with the domestic problems of the movement in every locality, they alone are in the best position to see what the present sectionalism and disunity and lack of policy mean in living practice. They are in a very much stronger position to voice the direct needs and demands of the workers than harassed officials amid the routine of a head office, unable to look outside the blinkers of their particular union. The opportunity is in the hands of the trades councils if they can see the position clearly and show the path ahead.

For this reason the calling of the First National Conference of Trades Councils a year ago was a very important step in the development of the movement. At this conference, called through the initiative of the Birmingham Trades Council, there were present 126 delegates from 67 trades councils, representing a total affiliated

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membership of over one million and a-quarter. In addition, sixty other trades councils wrote expressing agreement with the object of the conference and regretting their inability to send delegates owing to financial reasons.

The conference was very definitely given the cold shoulder both by the General Council and the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, because they saw in this conference the nucleus of an organisation that could, if it would, definitely challenge their leadership and be responsible for a big drive forward towards the greater unity and fighting power of the whole Trade Union Movement—something that the "big men" always call for, but never work for. The general criticism levelled against this attempt of the Trades Councils, the Cinderellas of the working-class movement, was that there was no need for them to take this action, as everything was satisfactorily looked after by the General Council and the Labour Party Executive.

Since then a year has passed, every event of which has gone to confirm the correctness of the need which the Trades Councils Conference was trying to fulfil. The confusion and stagnation of the movement has become patent to all, and the crowning exhibition of the Trades Union Congress has revealed the helplessness of the existing official leadership even to attempt to tackle the problem. The Back to the Unions campaign has shown that any attempt to carry out a common campaign depends for its execution on the Trades Councils. When it comes to organising a national campaign, the General Council has no machinery: everything has to be put on the Trades Councils, which are at present not organised or co-ordinated for their task. The General Council has, in fact, to act through the Trades Councils which are not represented either on the General Council or at the Trades Union Congress. In the same way when the threat of war arises, and the Joint Council of Congress and the Labour Party calls for Councils of Action to be formed, it is the Trades Councils that constitute the rallying centre around which such councils are formed. The General Council, in fact, at present is a head without a body. Only the Trades Councils can supply the body and the life-blood.

But the task which falls on the Trades Councils at the present moment is even heavier than this. At the present moment the

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central organs are failing to lead. This failure throws additional burdens and problems on the local organs. Not only does it become the rôle of the Trades Councils to voice the immediate feelings and demands of the workers and to afford the means of carrying through the common campaigns: they are also compelled to take the initiative in endeavouring to force a lead upon the central organs.

This is the special task of the Trades Councils Conference. That conference has the opportunity to supply what is the greatest need of the movement, a rallying centre to gather up a common movement that will so increase in volume and strength as to compel a new leadership in the central organs of the movement, a facing of the problems of the working class and unification of the working-class army.

The first conference already made a start with its task. The resolution which it drew up contemplated and outlined a complete reorganisation of the trade union forces on the lines of a single industrially departmentalised trade union organisation. But the first conference did not yet succeed in getting beyond the details of a scheme of organisation to the full scope of its task in facing the immediate needs and problems of the working-class movement to-day, and in making clear its own rôle in relation to those problems. It will be the task of the second conference to work out this wider programme.

The issues that are facing the working class to-day are manifest and need no elaboration.

Unemployment is still the most urgent fighting issue of the working class in this country. On unemployment we have still no plan of action. The adoption even of the unemployed demands is not yet definite, still less any serious attempt to secure them. The recent controversy on the one day general strike in support of the unemployed demands, and the rapid dropping of the proposal by most sections, shows how far we are yet from any campaign that means business. A united programme and united action on unemployment is the first essential to retrieve the working-class position.

Bound up with unemployment is the whole question of common policy on wages and hours issues. At present the confusion of the whole field is at an extreme point. While some sections of the

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Labour army are still retreating before new reductions, others are already putting in for increases. There is no co-operation in this; and the federated employers are able to play with the situation in the same way as they did in the initial stages of their offensive. It must be obvious to all that it is no longer any good to attempt to fight on sectional lines. If we are not to continue to be beaten we must have a concerted policy on wages and hours under a common direction. A national minimum wage would undoubtedly now be a rallying cry for the whole movement.

The same applies to other issues. In particular, housing urgently needs a definite campaign and action. The Rents Campaign last year was worked out and carried through on local initiative. But a national lead is essential to secure continuous, effective, and united action.

All these are issues that concern equally and unite the whole of the working-class movement without distinction of sections. A national programme must be of such a character as to rally the whole movement, and to bring into play all the forces of the movement equally on the political and the trade union side. It is a mistake to relegate certain dominant issues so purely the concern of the Labour Party or the Trades Congress respectively: for this means to sterilise the full effectiveness of our forces. Our aim must be to bring the whole of the working-class movement into play on the issues most urgently affecting the working class. And this brings us to what must be the second part of any programme in the reorganisation of the Labour forces to meet the new demands.

On all the issues that confront the working class the central need is united action which can bring the whole power of the movement into play. For this reason any programme that is to rally the working-class movement at the present point must deal with the biggest weakness of the movement—the lack of any central direction or authority. A real General Council must be established with power to direct the whole movement, and not only with power, but under responsibility to Congress to use that power and direct the movement on the lines laid down each year by Congress.

To effect this will mean not only the extension of the powers of the General Council, but the reorganisation of the present trade

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unions to establish unity on the only basis on which it can be established—the industrial basis—and to prevent the present overlapping and sectionalism that bar the way to united action.

If a clear and simple programme could be drawn up at the Birmingham Conference to cover these issues, there is no question that it would awaken the support of almost every active element in trade unionism to-day; and what is more, would be the means of reviving the interest and enthusiasm of many who have let themselves fall into indifference and apathy. In addition the campaign for such a programme, going beyond sectional issues and temporary or local agitations, would in itself be the first step to unite the movement.

But to carry out such a campaign the first need is to make the Trades Councils themselves stronger, more representative, and better organised to meet the demands of local leadership responding adequately to national issues.

At present in most cases the Councils are made up of representatives from local trade union branches. This is perhaps inevitable in small places where district committees of unions are non-existent, or in very large towns where in addition to the main Trades Council, say, the London Trades Council, each separate borough has its own Trades Council. Such a position is true of most large places, and practically no means of intercommunication exist between these many Councils, so that all is left to the activity and initiative of the active members, and each locality goes ahead without regard to the lack of support they receive or otherwise from the rest of the Trades Councils.

The conference can tackle this problem of tightening up the local and district machinery of the Councils. When this is done they are in a strong position to force their demands upon the Trades Union Congress.

For example, the various boroughs round London can continue to have their Councils made up of representatives from the trade union branches and the local unemployed committee; from this local council delegates can be elected to serve on the London Trades Council, together with representatives from all the trade union district committees, as well as from the district council of the unemployed. I am aware that something like this is supposed

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to exist, but owing to the number of important abstentions it does not function, and in any case the weakness of most large Trades Councils, such as Manchester, London, Glasgow, &c., is that few district committees of unions take an interest in the Trades Council activity.

Yet it is obvious that month by month the Councils are forced to play an increasingly important part in the movement. If from the conference an executive is elected that can meet, say, monthly, it is then in a position to see exactly what activities are being pursued by the Councils. It would be possible for it to work out the details of a programme such as I have indicated, and how best to get for it the fullest support, first through the district Trades Councils, secondly through the local Trades Councils, and finally right through the trade union branches. Such a body, working hand in hand with a leading General Council (on which the Trades Councils should be represented), could revitalise the movement.

If it is an amalgamation campaign, how much easier it becomes to make this possible; if instead of it being left to a few officials of the unions concerned, it has in addition the services of the people on the Trades Councils who are already working and fighting together, and who by their common experience see the value and need for amalgamation, and by pursuing active local amalgamation campaigns are able to make the campaign a success nationally. If, for example, last year when the General Council organised a few amalgamation conferences, which, because they were confined to a few full-time trade union officials, were an absolute failure, the local Trades Councils had been asked to co-operate, it would have meant that a real agitation would have been possible in the union branches, thus creating the will to amalgamation, the spirit that is necessary to overthrow the artificial barriers that exist towards amalgamation that are thrown up by the officials.

It is evident that the trend of the movement generally is towards creating a General Council with greatly increased powers. Some of the things aimed at are foreign to the average conceptions of many trade unionists. It will more and more devolve upon the Trades Council machinery to carry out the plans and campaigns of a centrally directed trade union movement, and it is because of these

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facts that the need for a reorganisation of the present Trades Council machinery is so necessary.

The Birmingham Trades Councils Conference can make a new page in the history of the movement if it will. By taking the lead and forcing the pace it can force the General Council itself forward. The opportunity in its hands is a great one, but the need of the moment is also great. This is no time for delay in moving forward: for the condition of the working class is too serious to be dallied with any longer.

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LIFE OF A COAL-MINER

By J. T.
(Member of the Yorkshire Miners' Association, and ex-Deputy)

AT the age of twelve the son of a coal-miner must, owing to the economic side of the home, make preparations for beginning work. The lad will be told to approach the under-manager with a view to being signed on. If he is successful, that is, if he looks intelligent, healthy, and well-made, the under-manager will sign him on or instruct him to go to another official for the purpose. He will require a certificate from the school authorities and his birth certificate.

Having satisfied them with his credentials, he signs the time book. He is now another victim to be exploited, and joins the rest of the wage-slave class—and on returning home he is greeted as a man and appears to himself to have soared into a different atmosphere. The mother will bestow many blessings upon her son and give him every encouragement, especially when Johnny gets six days in. He will be promised many of the good things he never could partake of before because of the tight hand which was put on the few coppers to spare (if any) from week to week; whilst father will sit at the fireside watching the rehearsal he himself and the rest of the colliers have gone through.

Being told when to commence he will probably turn out next morning with his father, who will put him up to how to carry on. Upon receiving the lamp and lamp check number which registers him as another wage-slave, he will go from the lamp station to the pit-head, where the miners descend and ascend; he will be told to stay at the deputies' station (General Rule 4), where the lamps are tried, where "market men," and men and boys who have been signed on, receive their instructions: who to work with and where the direction lies. The under-manager will have previously mentioned to the deputy about the lad signing on. The work may be lamp carrying (that is, getting lamps relighted that have been put out), or it may be greasing tubs, or opening and shutting doors for traffic to pass through, or he may be assisting a pony driver with a view to doing the same work himself when he becomes

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efficient. After finishing for the day he will be greeted with cheery words and a smile upon reaching home, with the usual question : "How do you like working down the pit?" After about three months to six months, if he shows signs of being useful, he will find, instead of keeping his first job, that he has jumped into a job that a much older lad was doing at five shillings per day (while he will be receiving about three and sixpence to four shillings per day). If a vacancy occurs he may be, after sixteen years old, transferred to a "corporal," or put in charge of an engine, driven by compressed air or electricity, or he may be clipping tubs on an endless rope, and taking the clips off, if clips are used, or doing the same with lashing chains, or at the bottom of an incline getting the full run coupled on and putting the drag on behind the run, taking the rope off the empty run when it lands, to put the rope on the full run, giving the signal to start off when all is in order, &c.

Most young lads have ambitions. To find out the most suitable lads who show signs of being valuable with further encouragement, someone will approach him in the interest of the company to know how he occupies his time away from the colliery and encourage him to attend the evening continuation classes run in the winter months for mining students to improve them in the knowledge of mining. The subjects taken are arithmetic, mining geology, methods of working and winning coal, methods of timbering and ventilation, gases (how to detect the presence of any of the four general gases found and what to do with them to remove them and make them harmless), air measurement, and hearing. Also the lads are taught to estimate the percentage of gas present by the size of the gas-cap upon one-tenth of an inch flame. The whole course of education given is for the benefit of the boss, to make the student fully efficient to handle and control men in his interest.

When it is known that he has become a student the official who first approached him may be his tutor at the night school (with suitable remuneration for his services). A few minutes now and again will be taken up, either before the end of the shift or at a slack time during the shift, making the student soar into a life of ease and comfort in imagination. But further advance and more opportunities for study are not gained by merit or intelligence or hours of hard serious study, but by some influential friend who

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puts your case forward, who moves warily in the circle of the mining educational department.

The lot of the student will have changed for the better. No one will be allowed to tread on his preserves now for some time to come ; every one who works in the same district will fear him, because everybody will soon know or hear of his abilities. He may be as dense as a Robot (machine made), but, in the interest of the boss, exaggerations are a wise policy, because it helps to have a few boss men in each district, since, if the usual official is detained, he knows that when he arrives he will get first-hand information—such as a break-down in the traffic arrangements, ventilation impeded by a fall of roof, accidents and how they happened and what has been done, with notes and why it happened. Each student must attend ambulance classes. As he must not stay at being a deputy he must aim at nothing short of becoming a manager. After a year at the continuation classes success ought to be obtained, providing a smattering has been kept up from school, but this does not finish the mining education career. Courses are taken every winter upon different subjects, steam, electricity, compressed air, walling shafts, tubbing shafts, surveying by miners' dial, levelling by dumpy level or theodolite, &c. Studies range from elementary to advanced mining, and county scholarships are given which entitle the student to go to the University for two years free, giving him a better chance to gain a second class (under manager), first class (manager).

During the time his studies have been improving the relations between himself and the boss have been more amicable; they will have grown into an atmosphere of affinity for one another.

Some stages of experience may be overlooked, such as a deputy's position being offered and accepted without the various stages to go through ; these stages could be worked in by going to the coal-face as a filler or trimmer, picking what stall and who he would like to work with. Then he would be set down later on as a stall-man, or moving with datallers, (stone-worker), erecting doors, timbering roadways, ventilation man, or following coal-cutting machines along the coal-face.

Experience having been gained by theory and practice, the first objective has been achieved by being placed on the official list, to the envy of some of the old staff and with not too much delight

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among the younger members. For there will now be a bigger competition for any higher vacancy that may occur, if death or promotion to another mine intervenes. There are possibilities of things being told out of school with a new-comer which it had been agreed to keep dark amongst the old staff. With the new-comer a certain period of careful watching and waiting now would be entailed, or some particular meeting place arranged away from the old ground ; this would mean a split up, and some may break away and make brotherly intercourse with the new-comer ; when this occurs the whole of the staff are not expected to stay very long.

A deputy on arrival at the mine should look and ascertain the height of the barometer and thermometer and record the same ; he must visit the fan-house and estimate the fan speed and the height of the water-gauge. On receiving his safety lamp he will ascertain whether it is put together correctly and see if the wick is cut straight and no corrosion surrounds the tube. He will then descend the mine and look over the last reports made previous to his shift commencing and sign them, after consulting the deputy leaving the mine about how things have been left. If he is satisfied the men and lads are set off when their lamps have been tried ; if things are not in order, the men and lads are sent home now. Since the Datum Line and the " best agreement ever made in mining history " came into being, only a few men are kept to make the place ready ; sometimes it means only an hour's delay and those who shift the debris and get the district ready for work get paid for it.

The deputy visits the men at work once during the shift before snap and once after ; every road is examined leading to and out of his district ; he must see to the safety of the men and lads under his charge, order timber where to be set if extra is required for roof support or sprags for the coal, see that packing is kept up (stone walls at gate sides) and bank packs, and arrange for cloths and doors to direct the air current in the proper directions. He must be able to detect gob-fires in the early stages, be acquainted with the various gases, and measure the air-current, also have good hearing ; he must see that a good supply of timber is kept at each working place, and that bandages and ambulance requisites are always at hand. Before leaving the mine he is supposed to give a " true report of the two examinations made during the shift."

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No official must have any political leanings to any other school of thought except the same that his boss accepts. To become a deputy was quite easy previous to the 1911 rules and legislation ; it now requires a certificate to satisfy the management that the applicant has passed through an authorised school, and passed the tests set out therein. Previous to 1911 favouritism was the dominant feature—the runners or place seekers would frequent the beershop the boss puts up at, taking the wife in respectable attire, and in some cases the poor lass was left to find her own way home unless some arrangement was made previous. This she accepts or rejects. Even to-day this kind of morals is carried on. It does not take long to find out the views of a local branch or lodge committee, because recently, owing to the 1921 sell-out by the M.F.G.B., and also the decay of capitalism which brings bankruptcy, poverty, and misery for the miners, their wives, and children, the line of thought must be switched off the master class on to the interests of the working class. If new officials begin with a reformist outlook, they are met with such cases of compensation, victimisation, abnormal conditions, minimum wage disputes, &c., that shake the very life out of the reformist, and he becomes a rebel by mouthing (but as for acting he will back out, or will plan some excuse before the boss at some critical deputation). The mine workers are now beginning to realise that they cannot expect anything from so-called leaders, but that they must learn from mistakes of the past.

The M.F.G.B. is not a fighting organisation, but a friendly benefit society. It has become a talking shop, doing nothing except doing the miners out of their bob a week. Compensation cases get shuffled about from one month to another, so that it drives men back to work unfit. Then they have to go back on the compensation again, and prove to the pit compensation doctor that they are not shamming. How long this will prevail time alone will tell ; the only way to end it is to end the capitalist system of exploitation.

The greatest tyrant who ever drew breath cannot commit a worse crime than to take the bread out of the mouth of another ; he cannot do more than kill his captive ; but in civilised Christian England it is counted far better to starve slowly out of existence any one who dares to speak out and voice a grievance, whether it be his own or his mates'.

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Being a victim of circumstances, and putting his views into practice, a man is lucky if, before he reaches home the same night, the under manager hasn't been informed of what he has said, word for word, at the branch meeting by one of the bosom friends of the boss. And this same individual may be the branch secretary or one of that kidney, who is out for his own ends and the betrayal of his class.

Suppose the victim has a good stall, he soon finds out that the deputy has a bone to pick with him. The deputy will make an extra special examination of the working-place, and before he goes something is bound to crop up. Then he is stopped from working in his own place, to be moved into a "making-up" stall or a minimum stall. The victim may weigh up form; he knows that the branch officials are no friends of his; he will in all probability keep quiet and not give further offence. In some cases success can be met, but generally failure lures him on. After serving punishment in an abnormal stall, then in a minimum wage stall, the market claims him as the last hope of a job; he finds mates who once held him in high esteem when he stood on his hind legs to fight for their rights now spurn him, giving him the cold shoulder, keeping aloof for good. Then comes seven days' notice from the boss; the case, after being shuffled over with the branch officials, is sent on to the council, the decision generally being thirteen weeks' victimisation pay; when the term is up a deputation is formed to get re-instatement for the victim. If this fails, he can go to hell for all either the employer or the trade union officials care. At the present time there are more victimisation cases in the M.F.G.B. than ever there were in any previous period. And still the game goes on!

That is how mining conditions are to-day in this "wait and catch the trade revival" period.

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POLIKUSHKA

(A Review by E. R.)

SOVIET Russia has struggled long and vainly for recognition as a State. Because she proved herself too strong to be overthrown, it was necessary to suffer her existence, but no more. The States of Europe and America, from the great Powers to the tiniest neutralised zone, adopted a policy of neglect and oblivion, such as in good bourgeois families meets the undesired presence of an illegitimate child.

Diplomatic relations being withheld, the young State turned next towards trade and commerce. This was the Philosopher's Stone, to touch the hearts of the western nations to gold. The illegitimate child of Europe is gradually and grudgingly being admitted within the bankers' halls and the trading marts of the capitalist powers, whose salons and courts are still closed.

But there is still another avenue to public approbation and esteem, and that is by the royal road of Art. Till now, this has been closed to the Government of Workers and Peasants, for reasons both internal and external. A nation fighting civil war, invasion, blockades, and famine has little chance to cultivate the fine arts, much less to disseminate them in the outer world. And the hundreds of thousands of Russian refugees who inundated Europe after the November revolution of 1917 contained a goodly number of intellectuals and artists who have been devoting all their talents to earn a living in exile and, incidentally, to decrying all that exists and struggles to exists in the Russia of to-day. Russian literature, Russian music, painting, and the Russian ballet—all are by-words of this latter-day European culture, whose appetite for novelties has been whetted by the post-war decadence. All the greatest artistic contributions of Russian culture have been poured forth unstintedly at the feet of the European, English, and American speculator, who alone has money to pay for these exotic luxuries. It was always tacitly recognised, however, that this wholesale reception to Russian art vouchsafed by a war-weary Europe was to the Russia of the Tsars transplanted on to friendly soil—it was

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the gorgeous, colourful, barbaric culture of the counter-revolution which appropriated to itself the right to speak in the sacred name of Russian art.

Meanwhile, in the Russia of the Soviets, a little band of faithful believers remained to carry through the revolution in the field of art as well as in politics and social life. The struggle of these true artists is written in blood and tears, for they, too, were soldiers of the New Order. Here is not the time to chronicle their triumphs and defeats, their enormous faith and sacrifices, which enabled Revolutionary Russia of the Soviets to maintain and to create a literature, drama, and the opera for the relaxation and heartening of the fighting workers and peasants, while Denikin, Kolchak, and Yudenitch were hammering at the very gates of Petrograd and Moscow. Those who have seen the flaming beauty of Russian opera, which is Russian history embodied and ensouled, and heard the haunting and melancholy magnificence of Russian music in those dark days—who have sat in momentary forgetfulness before the delicate dramas where Russian life was unfolded and interpreted with delicate and consummate genius—they alone can speak of the part which Russian art and culture played in the winning of the five-year battle fronts.

And now comes *Polikushka*, the Russian peasant of time immemorial, depicted by the pen of Tolstoy and for the first time moving in life before us through the six-act tragedy of his simple life in the film version sent out from the revolutionary heart of Moscow. Those who have not read the story of Tolstoy have only to conjure up a mental image of all they ever heard or read of the Russian peasant to visualise Polikushka, the oppressed and downtrodden of the earth, yet living and loving and laughing his simple life through to its tragic end, unmindful of its utter wretchedness, and of the revolutionary rôle it was destined to play, when accumulated suffering could bear no longer the burden of life as it was. Greater perhaps than the book is the film, for the stark beauty of its interpretation and the symbolic message it bears to the outer world. The revolutionary peasants of the Workers' Republic send greeting through Polikushka to their brothers in other lands—a mute and eloquent gesture through the

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medium of art of what horror has been in the Russia of the Tsars and of what heritage of woe they are struggling to free themselves. The privations of the revolution are self-imposed—it is the willing price paid for freedom from the bond-slavery of the past ; and lest those who decry the New Order should succeed in stifling the voice of history, Polikushka steps before us, out of his background of dirt and filth, and lives his little life once more, the life that sixty millions of Russian peasants lived through centuries of oppression. In that life there is a grim sadness too deep for words, and scarcely a written word is needed to explain the action of the film. There is a tragedy too deep for tears, though the tears of the audience fall freely—but the sense of tragedy remains like a wound, long after the tears are dried. Polikushka is the embodiment, not alone of the suffering of his own people, but of the evils of an entire system that has flourished and still flourishes throughout the world and against which the Republic of Workers and Peasants is the only effective negation.

Call it propaganda if you like. It has not yet been so-called by the thousands of fashionable Berliners who thrice nightly wend their way to the shrine of Polikushka, to pay their tribute to the art of revolutionary Russia. Because Polikushka is simple and true and beautiful, it is sheer art, and the first barriers have been broken down on that royal road that leads to the intercourse of nations, apart from king's courts and counting-houses. Polikushka, produced in sacrifice and suffering, by an unnamed artist who has given the best of himself to the revolutionary ideal, was sent as a frail and humble messenger from the land of famine to carry the message of the hungering peasants to the capitalist world. And Polikushka, by the truth that is in him, has succeeded. Polikushka is the mode, the craze, the fashion of idle Berliners, and will be handed by this jovial company to their class in other lands. Money is being garnered to buy food for the famine-stricken, but a richer harvest is still to be reaped. The jaded appetites of the rich will soon turn from the beautiful tragedy of Polikushka to seek new and more cheerful pleasures, but there awaits him a vaster audience than ever dreamed of in the days of Tolstoy. Throughout the world the workers and peasants, brothers and sisters of Polikushka, will flock to live for an hour the tragedy of his life, and a new and deeper

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understanding of the great revolution will be borne in upon them as a gigantic protest against the system that made such tragedies a commonplace. Propaganda, perhaps, but propaganda elevated to the heights of art. Such is Polikushka, the messenger from revolutionary Russia to the outer world.

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The World of Labour

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INTERNATIONAL

The Reformist Internationals and the German Situation

LAST month we reproduced for the benefit of our readers two important documents relating to the attitude of the Communist International and the Red International of Labour Unions towards the German situation.[1] This month we quote some extracts from the resolution adopted at a joint meeting held on October 3 and 4 of the Bureau of the Labour and Socialist International and the Bureau of the International Federation of Trade Unions. A comparison of the two statements is instructive.

The attitude of the Labour and Socialist International and the I.F.T.U. follows along the lines made familiar by Mr. Keynes. The policy of these two Internationals is symbolised by their recent dispatch of a memorandum to the League of Nations. They concentrate their attention on the means of finding "a just and effective settlement of the problem of Reparations."

> The value of the proposals (put forward by the Internationals for the settlement of Reparations) is shown by the fact that experts and men of good faith are becoming increasingly unanimous in favour of them. Particularly are the following proposals finding support in all circles and all countries.
>
> (*a*) The obligation on the part of Germany to restore the devastated regions to the full extent of her capacity, this capacity to be determined by an impartial authority.
>
> (*b*) The annulment of the charges imposed on Germany for military pensions contrary to the Fourteen Points of President Wilson which were reciprocally accepted as the basis of the Armistice.
>
> (*c*) The annulment of inter-allied war debts.
>
> (*d*) The adoption of the system of reparations in kind and in labour as far as its application is possible.
>
> (*e*) The flotation of loans for the prompt fulfilment of reparation obligations, and the transformation of the German debts to the Allies into an ordinary debt of a non-political character.

[1] THE LABOUR MONTHLY, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 237-240.

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The Internationals reprove in strong terms the Ruhr adventure of M. Poincaré, but chiefly, it appears, because :—

> . . . . This wrong action is also bad business . . . . The policy of M. Poincaré, with which the Belgian Government has associated itself, has not produced reparations. The " productive pledges " have proved sterile . . . . German distress has retarded the possibility of settlement and is increasing economic difficulties all over the world.

The actual situation in Germany is mentioned in the following words :—

> The political crisis in Germany and the chaos which menaces her threatens all Europe. Never before have we been confronted by a crisis of such gravity. The whole of Western civilisation will be imperilled if care be not taken . . . . If violence be permitted against the German workers all workers risk being the victims in their turn of war abroad and the brutal dictatorship of Fascism at home.

But what policy do the Internationals put forward to combat this twin danger of war and Fascism ? To quote their own words :—

> They demand a redoubling of propaganda for peace and International understanding. They address an urgent appeal to the United States to take their full part in securing the peace and financial and economic reconstruction of the world.

SPAIN

The Military Directory and the Working Class

EXCEPT for certain regions, such as Catalonia (of which Barcelona is the centre) and the mines of Biscaya and the Asturias, Spain is not an industrial country. Peasant agriculture, undeveloped and primitive, is the basis of the Spanish economic system. The peasants are exploited in a true feudal manner by the large landowners.

In the mining industry the capital is chiefly foreign and the genuine Spanish bourgeoisie is practically confined to Catalonia. The class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the feudal landowners clearly manifests itself in the Catalan separatist movement.

The campaign in Morocco (which has been intermittently waged since 1909) is another point of divergence between the agrarians and the industrialists, and the disastrous and continued failure of this campaign, coupled with an enormous and ever-growing deficit, has resulted in an acute crisis for Spanish capitalism, relatively weak and undeveloped as it is. The counterpart of the failure of the Moroccan campaign, and the expression of the crisis of Spanish capitalism, has been the violent suppression of the working class. And when the Spanish bourgeoisie cast about it for a Mussolini it naturally supported a man who had already, as Captain-General of Barcelona, become notorious for his savage strike-breaking activities in connection with the recent Barcelona transport strike.

The military dictatorship showed its hand the moment it seized power by declaring that all strike " violence," and all " unofficial " strike movements, would be treated with the utmost rigour of martial law. Within a few days an Exchange message reported that the prisons in Catalonia were crowded with arrested Communists. Further, the loudly trumpeted action against

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Catalonian separatism turned out to be simply directed against the revolutionary Syndicalists of Barcelona. The *Daily Telegraph* correspondent wrote that :—

> The Catalans nearly all belong to the bourgeoisie, and above all and before all their desire is to give battle to anarchy, preferring a Government opposed to their political ideals, if favourable to their economic interests.

The Directory appealed to the working class to "work more and better," and issued a manifesto in which the following sentences occurred :—

> In work is the salvation of the country, without any thought of Imperialist aims, which can only be pursued by those who are mad. . . . We want trade unions for protection and co-operation, and not for social resistance or to diminish production.

On top of this denial of Imperialism came preparations for an intensive continuation of the Morocco campaign. Further, the Directory took steps to see that it got the trade unions that it—and its supporters the Catalonian bourgeoisie—wanted. In addition to the usual repressive measures, an order was made that in future all trade unions should submit statements of their accounts to the Government.

In face of this grave menace to the whole working class of Spain, the organised working-class movement has been able to offer no effective resistance. The Socialist Party and its offspring, the General Union of Workers (*Union General de Trabajadores*), have been cultivating an "expectant" attitude with regard to the Directory. Manuel Llaneza, a leading official of the Asturias Miners' Union and a member of the Socialist Party, has, with the approval of the Party and of the U.G.T., visited General Primo de Revera and held conversations with him. The ulterior motives of these conversations have not yet transpired, but it seems clear that Llaneza, on behalf of the U.G.T., is coquetting with Spanish Fascism as D'Aragona and the Italian Confederation of Labour have been coquetting with its Italian counterpart.

The Syndicalist organisation, the National Confederation of Labour (*Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo*), under anarchist domination, has equally failed to give a lead to the working class in the present crisis. Shattered by the Governmental White Terror, and torn by futile pseudo-philosophical anarchist controversies, the C.N.T. has been unable to offer other than a halting and unorganised resistance. The anti-political attitude of anarcho-syndicalism has reacted fatally on itself. A year ago the Spanish Communist Party appealed to the C.N.T. for the formation of a United Front and received the answer that :—

> The invitation of the Communist Party to form a united working-class front is not acceptable from the point of view of our Confederation. The reason is clear: the Communist Party should not, and indeed cannot, represent the Spanish working class on the field of the economic struggle.

Between this impossible "no politics" attitude on the one hand, and the bankrupt reformism of the Socialist Party on the other, the Spanish Communist Party has a difficult part to play. Directly the *coup d'état* took place, it proposed a united front to the Socialist Party and the U.G.T., which these bodies refused, and have since done their best to sabotage. It has, however, succeeded in establishing a united front with some anarchist groups in Madrid. Through its organ, *La Antorcha*, it is striving—hampered by a severe Press

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censorship—to propagate amongst the Spanish workers the idea of a united front against reaction. The Socialist organ, *El Socialista*, is contenting itself with articles by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald on pacifism.

The situation in Spain which pre-disposed the seizure of power by the militarists has been effectively summed up as follows :—

> A monarchy devoid of all prestige; two political parties, Conservative and Liberal, both representing agrarian interests, pursuing practically the same policies, and only differing in personal antagonisms; a great clerical power among the rural and petty bourgeois masses; heavy pressure of taxation; a proletariat vanquished by White Terror, betrayed by the Reformists, and split up by the Anarchists who will not learn anything from the Russian Revolution; a young and courageous, but still inexperienced Communist Party; a well-organised and numerous officers' caste possessing simultaneous connections with the reactionary landowners, with the industrialists, and with the middle class influenced by the Fascist example; and the continuation of the Moroccan war.

ROUMANIA

Trade Union Congress

AN Extraordinary Congress of the Roumanian Trade Unions was held, on September 16-18, at Cluj (Klausenburg) in Transylvania. The number of trade unionists represented is variously given as 52,000 or 65,000.

The Roumanian Trade Union Movement is practically a post-war growth, due to the incorporation in Roumania, under the Peace Treaties, of large tracts of Transylvania and Hungary in which industrial capitalism is relatively well developed. In Old Roumania before the war there were only 7,000 trade unionists : directly after the war the number rose to 200,000. This increase in membership was accompanied by an increase in militant activity. Under Communist leadership, the unions engaged in an energetic struggle with the employers, culminating in a general strike. The Government was quick to perceive the danger, and embarked on a campaign of ruthless repression —arresting thousands of revolutionary workers, closing union offices, and confiscating funds. The union membership slumped to 26,000 in 1921. Having broken the back of revolutionary trade unionism, the Government proceeded to enact a law compelling all trade unions to obtain special licences from the authorities, and virtually submitting them to the control of the police. The law also laid it down categorically that no trade union should have any sort of connection with the Communist Party.

Seizing their opportunity, the Social Democrats undertook the task of organising "legal" unions. Those Communists who had survived the Government persecution proceeded to join these new unions, in order to agitate for a united working class front and a fighting policy against the capitalist offensive. This Communist activity is amiably described by the I.F.T.U. as "Moscow's work for the destruction of the trade unions," and the contrary Social Democratic policy of drift and defeatism is called "regular trade union work on normal lines."

The Social Democratic trade union bureaucracy found that the left-wing opposition in the unions was acquiring considerable influence. They therefore

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determined to bring matters to a head. Against the general feeling of the membership—who wished to discuss immediate questions of the day-to-day struggle—the agenda of the Trade Union Congress was confined, apart from the Secretary's report, to the question of affiliation to the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions. The town of Cluj was chosen—deliberately it is said—for the meeting of the Congress because it happened to be under martial law. It is reported that two days before the Congress opened two trade union leaders had a meeting with the Prefect of Cluj. This official undertook, in virtue of the summary powers vested in him by martial law, to deal with any left-wingers who might have the temerity to oppose the official elements in the Congress. He was, it appears, as good as his word : and several Communists were arbitrarily arrested during the Congress sessions.

During the first session of the Congress a stormy scene occurred over the reception of fraternal greetings from the Union of Youth. While the tumult was at its height the vote was taken (or so it was alleged later) for the Mandates (credentials) Commission. It so happened that the commission thus elected was solely composed of Social Democrats and members of the Trade Union General Council. The rest of the story we extract from the official *Press Service* of the I.F.T.U. :—

> The Commission which verified the mandates proposed to cancel sixty of the 292 mandates which were held by 217 delegates on the ground that they were invalid. This proposal was rejected. [By 26,456 to 25,710.] Thereupon, the President, acting on instructions received from the Trade Union Council, declared the session closed, and called a new session to which only those were admitted who declared themselves to be in favour of affiliation with Amsterdam.
>
> This procedure may at first sight appear to be violent and undemocratic, and under normal circumstances it would certainly be so termed. But there was a universal opinion that it was necessary to act in this way in order to do real trade union work, especially as it was generally known that the Communists would act in obedience to secret instructions, directing them to remain within the trade unions, whatever happened, and to continue their destructive work there.
>
> While the discussions were very stormy before the expulsion of the Communists, the later meetings were a model of orderly and business-like procedure, despite the language difficulties. After the division, it was ascertained that the majority of the delegates, representing 28,423 members, were taking part in the late proceedings of the Congress, and that these counted among them the representatives of the large unions, with the exception of the clothing workers, the woodworkers, and the leatherworkers. Individual delegates were present even from these unions . . . Affiliation with Amsterdam was now unanimously resolved upon.

This amazing statement calls for no comment. But in view of the eagerness with which reformist Socialists and trade union leaders of every stamp have striven to fix the responsibility for splitting the working-class movement upon the Communists, it is interesting to have on record such a frank official confession of a splitting policy on the part of the Amsterdam International.

It is noteworthy that the " majority " vote of 28,423 is, if the figure of 65,000 members represented be accepted, not a majority at all. Even if the official figure of 52,000 is taken, it is only a very bare majority.

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The official report concludes :—

> In order to do practical work, the seat of the Trade Union Council was removed from the capital, Bucharest, which is not an industrial town, to Klausenburg, an industrial centre, which is already the headquarters of most of the trade union federations. Moreover, in this town there is a widespread knowledge of both the German and the Hungarian languages, which means that the trade unions of Central Europe will be able to exert a greater moral influence.

It may be remarked here that the trade union bureaucrats had already had occasion to demand the dissolution of the Bucharest Trade Union Commission on the grounds of its Communist affiliations. Also Klausenburg (Cluj) happens, as pointed out above, to be under martial law, and the administrators of martial law have been favourably disposed towards the reformist trade union officialdom.

GERMANY

The Crisis in the Social Democratic Party

THE " United " Social Democratic Party of Germany is, at the present moment of acute crisis in Germany, torn with internal dissensions. Masses of Social Democratic workers have left the Party and are streaming into the Communist Party. Those that remain in the Party moreover, are moving steadily to the Left, and the opposition to the Right Wing leaders, with their policy of coalition with the big industrialists, is daily growing in intensity.

The oppositional movement has spread to certain leaders of the Social Democratic Party, among whom it appears as a more or less faint reflex of the leftward evolution of the Social Democratic masses. The Weimar Conference of Social Democratic Deputies of the Left Wing on July 29 was an illustration of this movement. The conference demanded an end to the policy of coalition with the bourgeoisie, co-operation with the Communist Party, and united action against the Fascist danger. Dr. Paul Levi (an ex-Communist), one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Left, some time later expressed the view of himself and his colleagues in a speech at Leipzig. He said :—

> Behind the mask of the " Great Coalition," Capital sharpens its sword for the attack on Labour. Inevitably the German Social Democracy must face the question : dictatorship of the proletariat or dictatorship of the bourgeoisie ? Under the semblance of a Coalition Government the Social Democrats have consented to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat is a necessity. Political power does not consist in the possession of seats and votes in Parliament, but much rather in the activity of the working masses. The Communists are one of the most active elements among the working masses. We therefore stand for collaboration with the Communists.

The attitude of the Social Democratic workers who are tending to the Left found expression in a resolution of the workers at the State printing works in Berlin. This resolution demanded :—

(1) The resignation of the Social Democratic Ministers from the Great Coalition.
(2) The final abandonment of the policy of coalition, and the dismissal of all the leaders occupying official Party positions who support the Great Coalition.
(3) The formation of a new editorial staff for *Vorwaerts*.

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(4) The formation by the Party and the trade unions of a Socialist Government with the following programme :—

(*a*) Liquidation of the Ruhr struggle by the opening of immediate negotiations with France and Belgium.

(*b*) Seizure of real values.

(*c*) Dissolution of the Reichswehr.

The Communist Party has been quick to criticise the defeatist Ruhr policy such as that advocated in the above resolution, and to stress the point that any liquidation of the Ruhr struggle, or of reparations generally, must take place at the expense of the bourgeoisie. It is to this end that the demand for the seizure of real values is put forward.

Most striking as an instance of the move to the Left of the Social Democratic masses was the Berlin District Conference of the Party on October 7. A motion in favour of the Great Coalition failed to find sufficient support even to be put to the conference. By 219 to 215 votes the election of a new District Executive and the dismissal of the present editorial staff of *Vorwaerts* was demanded. As a result of the activities of the conference executive, a decision on these points was, however, deferred till the next meeting, to be held on October 21. (This meeting confirmed the previous decision.) Such was the temper of the conference that many leaders, such as Hilferding, found difficulty in securing a hearing. Appeals for confidence in the leaders of the Parliamentary Party met with derision. A liberal observer, the correspondent of the *New Statesman* (Robert Dell, who in his wavering reflects very closely the ups and downs of the revolutionary wars, sneering at the Communists when weak and applauding them when strong), was moved by this conference to remark that, in spite of all the efforts of the Right Wing leaders, now thoroughly discredited, there could be no sort of doubt that the Social Democratic rank and file were rapidly moving forward to the formation of a united front with the Communist Party. The *Observer's* correspondent estimated that 80 per cent. of the Social Democratic membership had passed away from the old leaders.

The Workers' Governments

The chief weapon of the German working class in the present struggle against White dictatorship is the Workers' Government. In its preliminary stage this consists of a Social Democratic Government which depends for its parliamentary majority on the votes of Communist deputies: as a result, the Communist Party is enabled to secure the acceptance of certain demands, such as the establishment of a Workers' Defence Force and of Workers' Control Committees to check food speculation. In its later stage the Workers' Government becomes a true Workers' Government by the entry of Communists into the Cabinet and the drawing up of a common Communist-Socialist Governmental programme.

The preliminary stage occurred in Saxony in March of this year: it was described fully in these notes in the May LABOUR MONTHLY.[1] In Thuringia it was reached early in September. With the Ruhr surrender, the setting up of the dictatorship throughout the Reich, and the attack on the eight-hour day, together with the ever-growing Fascist menace in Bavaria, negotiations for the entry of Communists into the Saxon and Thuringian Cabinets were set on

[1] Vol. 4, No. 5, pp. 313-314.

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foot. These negotiations were successfully concluded, for Saxony on October 10 and for Thuringia on October 17. In Saxony the Communist Ministers were Paul Böttcher (Finance) and Fritz Heckert (Economic Affairs), with Heinrich Brandler as State Secretary; in Thuringia Dr. Korsch (Justice) and Tenner (Economic Affairs).

The programme of the Saxon Government included the following points:—

(1) All important official posts to be filled by tried Republicans, in place of reactionary elements.

(2) Arming of the Workers' "Centuries" for resistance to Fascist attacks.

(3) The passing of a law forbidding the closing down of factories and workshops by the employer.

(4) The formation of a working committee of the Social Democratic and the Communist parliamentary fractions for the common consideration of Bills and the organisation of common parliamentary action.

(5) The Control Committees to have police powers to deal with profiteers and speculators.

(6) Organised relations with other Workers' Governments in Germany.

The attitude of the Communist Party towards the new Saxon Government was expressed in an important manifesto which was issued immediately on the formation of the new Government. It runs as follows:—

> The Central Committee of the German Communist Party entirely approves of the entry of three of its members, Comrades Böttcher, Heckert, and Brandler, into the Saxon Government. We are on the eve of an offensive on the part of the big capitalists, the landowners, and the monarchist generals, against the working masses. A military dictatorship, destined to drown the working class in its own blood, is at hand. The Communist members of the Saxon Government are instructed by the Party to organise and to direct, with the Left Wing Social Democratic members of the same Government, the defensive front of the working class. The Communist Ministers are placed under the direct control and supervision of the Party.
>
> The entry of our comrades into the Saxon Government is not the result of parliamentary bargaining: it expresses the determined will of the working masses to oppose the United Front of the working-class struggle to the capitalist offensive. For the Party, this event must act as a stimulus towards the realisation of the United Working-class Front throughout Germany.
>
> The Government of Workers' Defence in Saxony must be a real signal for the whole German working class. But this Government needs the support of the working class throughout the Reich. The attempt has been made in Saxony, at the moment of greatest danger, to form a united Government of Workers' Defence with the Left Wing Social Democrats. It will only succeed if the Party can mobilise the working class of the whole Reich in the formation of a United Front against its class enemy.

From the programme of the Thuringian Government the following extracts have been taken:—

> The new Government will be a Government of Workers' Defence. Its policy will be such that it will serve the interests of the working masses only.
>
> The Thuringian Workers' Government will fight in every possible way against Fascism, against a war of revenge, against reaction and military dictatorship.
>
> To this end, and for defence against Bavarian reaction, the Communist-Socialist Government of Thuringia will remain in close relations with the Communist-Socialist Government of Saxony.

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The two States will form together a " red bloc "and will take common defensive measures against reaction and military dictatorship.

The " red bloc " of Workers' Governments is likely to be augmented in the near future. Latest information indicates that the masses of the workers in Brunswick, Anhalt, and the Free City of Hamburg are demanding the formation of Workers' Governments in their respective States. Over one hundred Works Councils in the biggest factories in Brunswick have voiced this demand. We reproduce a typical resolution :—

(1) The Social Democratic Party should enter into relations with the Communist Party with the view of forming a Workers' Government modelled on those of Saxony and Thuringia.

(2) The Workers' Parties should send a delegation to Dresden to greet the new Saxon Government and to discuss with the Saxon Workers' Parties the possibility of forming a similar Government in Brunswick.

The solidarity of the Workers' Governments of Central Germany with the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is about to find practical expression in an agreement which is now being negotiated. By this agreement Russia will supply Saxony with grain and other food produce.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE COLLAPSE OF THE WORLD OF WEBB

The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation. By Sidney and Beatrice Webb. (Allen and Unwin. 2nd edition. 4s. 6d. cloth, 2s. 6d. paper.)

[SECOND REVIEW]

THE world revolution, having shaken many other things, has also disturbed the peace of the Webbs. With their usual quickness for the perception of facts once these are well above the surface, they have discovered in 1923 that capitalism is collapsing, that the class war which they denied is increasing in intensity, and that the reforms and programmes which they have advocated and laboured for during thirty years are being thrown aside as so much lumber by the bourgeoisie in the moment of struggle. This collapse of the whole edifice of pseudo-socialism to which they have given their life's work has shaken them so severely as to lead them to write a new kind of book.

After writing for thirty years about the "Parish and the County," "The Manor and the Borough," "Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes," "The Story of the King's Highway," "English Prisons under Local Government," "The Relief of the Poor and the Repression of Vagrancy," "The History of Liquor Licensing in England," "The Consumers' Co-operative Movement," "The History of Trade Unionism," "Industrial Democracy," "Problems of Modern History," "The Works Manager To-day," "Grants in Aid," "English Poor Law Policy," "The State and the Doctor," "The Break-Up of the Poor Law," "The Public Organisation of the Labour Market," "Men's and Women's Wages," and "The Prevention of Destitution"—they have now for the first time discovered and written a book about—Capitalism.

This fact is itself a revolution in the minds of the Webbs. For the first time they have tried to express their general outlook. The result is invaluable. Without this crowning book the array of their books would be incomplete. With it the ironic last chapter added by history to their work in 1914 finds expression. This book is the confession of their failure.

> "For over thirty years," they write, "our time and energy have been devoted to municipal administration, to research into the facts of social organisation, and to devising and advocating measures by which the existing profit-making system may be replaced, with the least political friction and the most considerate treatment of 'established expectations,' by a scientific reorganisation of industry as a democratically controlled public service . . . Before the Great War there seemed to be a substantial measure of consent that the social order had to be gradually changed in the direction of a greater equality in material income and personal freedom. . . . We thought, perhaps wrongly, that this characteristic British acquiescence on the part of a limited governing class in

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the rising claims of those who had found themselves excluded both from enjoyment and control would continue to be extended, willingly or reluctantly, still further from the political into the industrial sphere ; and that while progress might be slow, there would at least be no reaction." And they go on to describe the violent reaction and even " counter-revolution " they have experienced in England since the war.

Perhaps wrongly ! What the revolutionary socialists demonstrated at the outset, it has taken the slaughter of the best part of a human generation, the destruction and chaos of half of the world, and the smashing and crushing of the working class in all the leading countries to awaken the Webbs to the possibility of their error. The price of their education is too expensive.

And at the end of it all what have they to say ? Nine-tenths of this book is taken up with the repetition of the familiar arguments that capitalism is inefficient, wasteful, and productive of vicious results. This is, no doubt, the section which led the simple-minded British Marxist, to whom all criticisms of capitalism are more or less the same, to acclaim this production of the Webbs in a " Marxist " magazine as " a good book—one which Plebs will do well to buy and enjoy." The actual argument is contained in the remaining tenth, and is a simple exposition of the bankruptcy of the last stage of reformism. The old artillery of reformism—the denial of classes, the theory of increasing happiness and progress, the belief in the super-class character of the State—are all thrown overboard under the shattering stress of facts. Only the impotent reformist conclusion remains in all its bareness, stripped of the premises that gave it support, and lingering on only as a touching, half-despairing confession of faith in the magic formula of political democracy and evolution to socialism by consent of the bourgeoisie.

They admit the division of classes—not simply as an economic classification, but as the essential living truth of capitalist society.

> " The division of the community into two permanent and largely hereditary castes " (p. 21). " By capitalism we mean the particular stage in the development of industry and legal institutions in which the bulk of the workers find themselves divorced from the ownership of the instruments of production, in such a way as to pass into the position of wage-earners, whose subsistence, security, and personal freedom seem (*sic*) dependent on the will of a relatively small proportion of the nation ; namely, those who own, and through this legal ownership control, the organisation of the land, the machinery, and the labour force of the community, and do so with the object of making for themselves individual and private gains " (p. xi).

They admit the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—

> " the peculiar kind of tyranny now exercised even in the most advanced politica democracies by a relatively small class of rich men over a mass of poor men " (p. xv). " Seeing that no individual owner recognises himself as a dictator, let it be at once added that the dictatorship is a class dictatorship " (p. xiii).

They admit the nullification of political democracy by this dictatorship.

> " The typical phenomenon of twentieth-century democracy, in which private wealth, concentrated as to direction in relatively few hands, is seen very largely to control, by its dominion over the newspaper Press, the mental

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environment of the whole population; and by ts power in this and in various other ways even to nullify universal suffrage" (p. 184).

They admit the failure of the hopes of gradual progress and reform.

"We thought, perhaps wrongly, &c." (p. 233).

"Worse things than any citizen thought possible ten years ago have happened and are still happening daily" (p. 222).

They admit the increasing intensity of the class war.

"The twentieth century found the feeling of a class-war—of an irreconcilable cleavage of interest between the 'Two Nations' in each land—rapidly spreading to nearly every section of the wage-earners, in practically all countries in which the capitalist system had become dominant" (p. 212). "To stave off this extremity of social disaster the Italian bourgeoisie are arming themselves to subjugate the proletariat by open violence. For some years past the capitalists of the United States have been waging quite extensive wars against the labourers' unions" (p. 223). "The class-war, if and when battle is joined in earnest, will be one of the wars of religion, and may be waged on a scale, and with a ferocity, a self-sacrifice, and a persistence which will make the religious wars of the seventeenth century seem mere riots by comparison" (p. 225).

And what is the conclusion from all this? In the face of the dictatorship of the capitalists, of the nullification of political democracy, of the collapse of hopes of progress, of the growing intensity of the class struggle and the growing violence of the capitalists, what is the proletariat to do? Is there any alternative but to fight or to submit? The reformist, driven into a corner by the hard stress of facts, compelled to admit the facts now visible in the eyes of all, has only one alternative to offer. To those who are accustomed to treat the Webbs as serious political writers, the conclusion may seem incredible; yet it is the correct and logical last position of reformism. The sole solution of the Webbs is—to appeal to the better nature of the capitalists!

"We therefore solemnly warn our capitalists . . ." So set out the Webbs in their final verdict, speaking in terrible judgment and awaiting the bourgeoisie to hear and tremble.

The thunder of the revolution is turned into stage thunder for the benefit of the reformist to enable him to show the bourgeoisie why they should give him power.

And then, with a pitiful last failing of confidence, in the final sentence of all, this study of the tremendous forces of world capitalism and revolution after the war by the intellectual leaders of British Socialism concludes with a pathetic, half-hopeless appeal for—better relations between employers and employed . . .

"recognition that there is a better way for both. In an attempt, possibly vain, to make the parties understand their problem and each other better—in the hope that it is not always inevitable that Nature should harden the hearts of those whom she intends to destroy—we offer this little work."

This, then, is the final outcome of the whole Webbs' philosophy. This pitiful product, this little parson's offering—"possibly vain"—is the final outcome of that vast and elaborate edifice of reformism which Webb set

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himself out to build thirty years ago when he rejected the despised Marxism that he did not understand and set out from the precincts of the Colonial Office and the Temple to show a new path to the working class.

R. P. D.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

Guilds and Co-operatives in Italy. By Odon Por. With a Preface by "Æ" and an Appendix by G. D. H. Cole. Translated by Mrs. Emily Townshend. (The Labour Publishing Company. 5s.)

Fascism. By Odon Por. Translated by Mrs. Emily Townshend. (The Labour Publishing Company. 7s. 6d.)

THE village that voted the earth was flat did not need facts or figures to support its thesis; it was democratically expressing the people's will. The author of these books, who seems to have aimed mainly at expressing his own inner sociological consciousness, is just as free from the need for detailed accuracy. It is scarcely possible to find a date, a fact, and a figure on the same page in *Fascism* and there are no significant economic facts and figures whatever. *Guilds and Co-operatives* is only a little better in this respect.

Yet Signor Por, criticising the narrowness of orthodox revolutionaries (and of "plutocrats"), points out sagely that "the processes of history do not develop according to theoretical formulæ . . . .; they proceed along the track which is laid down for them by economic factors."

This sentence occurs on page 6. The unreality that it represents for Signor Por is shown at the beginning of chapter 6, where he says, "Before writing this book, and in order to detach myself spiritually from history in the making, I have re-read Machiavelli's *The Prince* and 'Æ's' *The National Being.* One might have thought that the economic factors which brought about the historical process known as the Fascist Revolution could be more easily found elsewhere.

But while it is impossible to discover from *Fascism* exactly what Fascism represents in Italy's economic development (or collapse), or what are the big forces behind it, it is possible to disentangle one thread from the jumble of narrative, philosophy, and declamation. And once that thread is picked out the book becomes as exciting as a detective story. Clues can be discovered on almost every page. It even becomes possible to understand the appreciation with which Signor Por quotes this sentence from a Fascist writer :—

> The Fascist State, although following a rigid course peculiarly its own, is, in view of its origin, most complex, Catholic, Reactionary, Democratic, Liberal, Reformist, and Trade Unionist; for it eliminates all these parties and takes their place.
>
> The Fascist State is in fact a synthesis, a little obscure still in some respects. . . .

The clue that gives this book a meaning—that even makes it a delight to read—comes in the analysis of Fascism by Clara Zetkin :—

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> Large numbers of the petty bourgeoisie, including even the middle classes, had discarded their wartime psychology for a certain sympathy with reformist Socialism, hoping that the latter would bring about a reformation of society. They were disappointed in their hopes. . . . These masses are joined by large circles of the proletariat, who have given up their faith not only in socialism, but also in their own class. *Fascism has become a sort of refuge for the politically shelterless.*

It is this element in Fascism which we need most to consider ; those who think of Mussolini as simply a White Guard leader like Horthy have to confine both their analysis and their propaganda to execration; we have got to realise that the Fascist Revolution was made possible only by working-class support—and that this working-class, Socialist support was given, not because Fascism is a "development of Socialism" or even a rather hazy synthesis of Socialism with most of the other isms, but because of a big flaw within Socialism itself, the flaw which is best named Opportunism.

Fascism was born from Opportunism : Nationalist Socialist during the war, the Fascisti joined in the Fiume adventure, and then deserted D'Annunzio; "neutral" during the seizure of the factories by the metal-workers, they later spent much of their energies in smashing the workers' organisations; republicans, they became monarchists. Their promises of workers' control and no exploitation in industry seem to have got lost in the "synthesis" already mentioned (which reminds one of the synthesis achieved by Gilbert and Sullivan's seaman, who announced that "Oh, I am the cook and the captain too and the mate of the Nancy brig," having devoured those individuals).

Fascism is itself, then, opportunist to begin with; it attracted to it opportunists of all shades. It took with it the masses of the workers and of the bourgeoisie that the political opportunists represented and had been leading. It held these masses and drew strength from them, while, at the bidding of the industrialists and financiers, trade unions, guilds, co-operatives, socialised municipalities, and all the organisations and achievements of the workers were brutally destroyed.

And the thing that is so fascinating in Odon Por's book is that he is one of the most perfect types of opportunist possible, and that he relates with placid candour (though without direct intention) the reasons why, as a "Guildsman," he rallied to Fascism !

One feels somehow that this "exclusive revelation" ought to have appeared in the Sunday Press. Here is this eminently respectable gentleman—an idealist of a particularly fanciful type—describing how he was led into "a life of crime."

But actually it has an importance, a seriousness, this intimate and detailed document, that deserves more exact study. For the position from which Signor Por begins—outlined in *Guilds and Co-operatives*—is so reminiscent of the position of many British Socialists that it is impossible to dismiss Signor Por as an eccentric product of Italian conditions.

He represents an international tendency; and the fact that he belongs to the Guildsman sect of the opportunists makes him all the more interesting. State Socialists and their use and abuse as agents of capitalism were already well known to us; until Fascism appeared it was only theoretically clear that guildsmen would be no less malleable.

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It is difficult to find short phrases to show the limits of Signor Por's spiritual detachment before the Fascist Revolution. From *Guilds and Co-operatives* these sentences stand out :—

> A Socialist Government in Italy would not need to experiment. There would be no need to destroy, nor to impose institutions on the masses. . . . Socialism would follow up tendencies already existing and already producing results.
>
> In exercising the novel functions of partnership in industrial and commercial undertakings, the State will acquire the technical and financial knowledge which will enable it to supervise the whole industry of the country.
>
> We have come to the conclusion that social transformations can become effective only when the struggle between classes or political parties give rise to such a mentality, to such capacities, to such institutions and functions as anticipate materially and spiritually the Utopia for which the struggle is waged.
>
> A class struggling for social ends must cease to be a class before it can attain those ends.
>
> The " Dictation of the Proletariat " is not practicable in Italy, and, what is of more importance (*sic*), it is not indispensable to the revolution.

These particular echoes of all the Opportunists of all the world were put in print before the Fascist Revolution. In *Fascism* we find a defence of the new " dictatorship of the opportunists," qualified of course by the admission that, although it is unfashionable, " we instinctively refuse to believe that violence, bloody and destructive, is inevitable." Dictatorship without violence has surely already been patented by Herr Kautsky.

Later in the book it is described how Socialism failed in Italy. The failure was due to lack of "statesmanship"; the Socialists were "anti-national" and did not support the Fiume adventure. . . . .

We could go on to almost any length tracing the thread of Opportunism. Obvious reasons forbid this; but one thing needs emphasising again—this is a book which ought to be read and studied. We may laugh at the theories of Reformism when we only have to do with publicists or lay preachers; but when they lead to the last dictatorship to shelter the bourgeoisie, they want careful analysis.

We need a book on Fascism that will answer the obvious questions. There was an industrial-financial crisis in Italy, in the spring of 1922, so severe that the issues of new capital fell steadily from 250 millions lire in February (a normal figure) to less than a million and a half in May. Has this crisis any connection with the gamble on which the bourgeoisie of Italy embarked when they decided to give Fascism a slack rein ? And there are many similar questions to be answered. But when this book is written, the author should turn to Odon Por for a glimpse of the psychological machinery by which the politically shelterless became a shelter, under which alone capitalism could be continued, the workers crushed, wages cut down, hours lengthened, and profits increased.

T. H. W.

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Struggle of the Trade Unions Against Fascism. By Andreas Nin. With an Introduction by Earl R. Browder. (Trade Union Educational League, Chicago, Ill. 15 cents.)

America The Peacemaker. By Jaime C. Gil. (Veritas Publicity Bureau, New York. $1.00.)

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New Standards. No. 1, October, 1923. Edited by G. D. H. and Margaret Cole. (Lake View, Vale of Health, London. 3d.)

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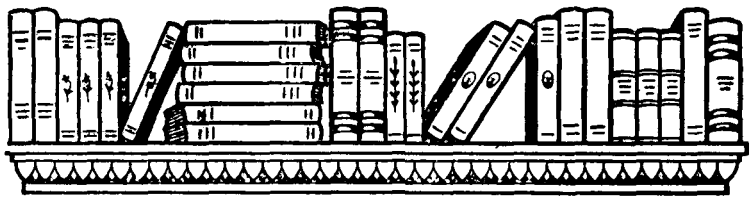

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